

HOW TO BECOME A JOURNALIST

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BY
ERNEST PHILLIPS
M.I.J.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY

R. H. DUNBAR.

Vice President of the Institute of Journalists.

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How to Become a Journalist

A

PRACTICAL GUIDE TO NEWSPAPER WORK.

BY

ERNEST PHILLIPS, M.J.I.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY R. H. DUNBAR,

*Assistant Editor of the "Sheffield Daily Telegraph," and formerly Vice-President of the
National Association (now Institute) of Journalists.*

LONDON

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON & COMPANY
LIMITED

St. Dunstan's House,

FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY HORACE COX, WINDSOR HOUSE,
BREAM'S BUILDINGS, E.C.

PREFACE.

IN the following pages it has been my endeavour to provide a handy and thoroughly safe guide to beginners in newspaper work. A little over a year ago I published in the *Reporters' Journal* a series of articles entitled "Hints to Junior Reporters." At the conclusion of the series it was represented to me that the articles were worth republication in book form, and Mr. Ford, the editor of that publication, having kindly given me permission to reproduce them, I set to work to re-write and amplify them. Several new subjects have been dealt with, and in order to make the book of greater service, chapters on editorial work and journalism as a field of occupation for women have been included. So far as I know no other book on the market deals with the subject in the manner adopted in the following pages. I have given what I believe to be the best advice as to the way to obtain a situation on the Press, and have

sketched out the qualifications most necessary for success in journalism. In this respect the book will be of some value to parents and guardians looking out for professions for their sons and wards, as it will enable them to determine whether the latter are in possession of those qualities which would fit them for newspaper work.

The book deals more particularly with journalism as practised in the provinces. The truth is that there is little need of a manual for the London journalist. It is very rarely the case that beginners are admitted on the staffs of the London papers, which are manned by journalists who have, in the great majority of instances, obtained their knowledge and experience on the provincial Press. Mr. Lucy may be cited as an example of this, the "H. W. L." of the *Daily News* and the "Toby, M.P." of *Punch* having gone up to London from sleepy Shrewsbury. Mr. Lucy's case is but typical of dozens of others. The provinces are, indeed, the great training grounds of British Pressmen, and it is because of this that the journalism described in the following pages is the journalism known and practised in the provinces. Press work on both daily and weekly papers is dealt with, and as I have had experience of both, my observations have at least the merit of being based upon an

intimate acquaintance with the subject upon which I am writing.

I cannot conclude without taking this opportunity of thanking Mr. R. H. Dunbar, assistant editor of the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, for his valued contribution of an "Introduction," which I am convinced will add materially to the worth and usefulness of the volume.

E. PHILLIPS.

Lancaster Standard Office,

May, 1895.

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INTRODUCTION.

JOURNALISM is the youngest and the freest of all the professions. Its title to rank as a profession technically dates from the Charter granted to the Institute of Journalists (formerly the National Association of Journalists, of which I had the honour to be vice-president). Of course the pursuit of literature has at all times been regarded as something more than a trade; but it was not until 1889, when the Charter was obtained, that Journalism was legally recognised as a profession in the same sense as Law and Medicine. It differs from both, as well as from the Clerical Profession, in being absolutely open to all comers. Clergymen, doctors, and lawyers—perhaps I ought to reverse the order, for undoubtedly the first advocate was the Devil—enter into newspaper work, invited and uninvited, and make money by it, while following their own calling at the same time. No journalist, however,

may preach from the pulpit, plead in court, or practise medicine unless he has taken holy orders or passed the legal and medical examinations. It is inevitable that Journalism should be free, for it is, in the very nature of it, a calling that cannot be closed, and although the operations of the Institute must tend to make more difficult the abuse of the term "journalist" by people who have no right to use it, and who in the use of it debar others who have the right and are duly qualified, yet no incorporated body can ever secure for journalists such exclusive possession of their own vocation as is enjoyed by their brethren of the older professions. It is, on the whole, scarcely desirable that journalism should be reserved for journalists, yet there remains the fact, the more remarkable the more one thinks of it, that people who would deem it highly improper for a journalist to trench upon their calling, never hesitate for a moment to trench upon his. Barristers in the High Courts of the capital, and on circuit out of it, do regular duty as reporters at stated remuneration. When the Wesleyan Conference comes round the assistant editor of every important daily has the choice of half a hundred ministerial pens to report the proceedings. It is the same with all the other gatherings of the various Methodist bodies. These

instances could be multiplied to any extent. Another remarkable view of it is this: The mechanics who set the type of the article written and report transcribed, and the machinememen who print them, have their crafts kept as close as Trade Union organisation can make them, while the man whose brain work they deal with has no protection whatever. It says much for the honour of journalists that under such circumstances there should be so little friction in their ranks, and so few examples of self-seeking in the struggle to reach the few prizes of the profession.

These prizes are rarer in journalism than in any other profession, and, as spectators see most of the game, experienced pressmen repeatedly notice the best journalists being passed in the race by those who make a little ability, coupled with a lot of assurance, go a very long way. At this moment several of the most lucrative posts in the United Kingdom are held by men whose subordinates, in natural parts and press training, as in general knowledge and varied reading, are by far their superiors—a fact to my thinking of sufficient importance to bear in mind in a book presented as a “practical” guide to becoming a journalist. How comes it that some people get above others so much worthier of the higher place? There

is only one answer. It is by keeping a keen eye on the main chance. It is by watching and taking every advantage of getting on. Not a high ideal, I admit, and many men, as the saying is, "are not built that way." "If we cannot rise by our merit," they say, "we will remain where we are." And they *do* remain where they are, while they see persons whom they probably taught to mark proofs, or to distinguish between *brevier* and *bourgeois*, pass easily to the editorial chair, where they get the pay and the honour while others do the work. One of this type, in the fullness of his assurance, has been heard to lay down the law that an editor ought never to write anything, but should make it his business to grace by his presence all notable functions of society in order to "keep touch" with the dominant factors in it. That is not the standard of the men who are really worthy of the positions they hold. For a society journal, which lives by the unconsidered trifles of everyday gossip in "the upper ten," the *Man about Town*, and, more especially, the lady in the fashionable "swim," are indispensable; but for a leading daily paper the editor who secures the confidence of his staff, and the respect of the people among whom he works, is a man who *can* write and *does* write, who has small pleasure in the banquetting

hall but much at his desk, directing the complex activities which result every morning in the production of a well-conducted, vigorously-written, readable, and attractively-arranged English daily paper.

It is the same in every department of newspaper work. The assistant editor, as next in rank to the editor, and his chief's right hand, should be the next ablest man on the staff, ready at a moment's notice to take the editor's place, and write on any subject which suddenly springs up. The assistant editor who cannot do that is not likely to remain assistant editor long. Then the chief sub-editor, whose position comes third, must also do chief sub-editor's work—that is, take in hand the most important of the duties in dealing with the mass of matter which comes over the wires, or the quotable portions of the important Metropolitan morning and evening papers, not forgetting such provincial dailies as have a reputation for containing special items worth reproducing. The chief reporter, too, must do chief reporter's work. To pass it on to another member of the staff, is tantamount to a confession of incompetency or disinclination to tackle it—always a fatal admission for a person in authority to make. The commander who does not command will not long maintain a cohesive staff.

My memory goes back to Russel, of the *Scotsman*, and Hannay, of the *Courant*, in the brightest days of Scotch journalism, as men who thought more of their work and took greater pride in it than any editors I ever knew, except one whom it has been my pleasure and privilege to be with for over twenty years—an English editor still, I am happy to say, by his trenchant pen and untiring devotion to duty, able to shame many of those *dilettanti* dabblers in journalism of our day. And yet, when I look around and see the class of persons who are in coveted positions—the higher the pay the less to do, as a rule—I am constrained to confess that the “practical” journalist can hardly be called “practical” if he does not profit by what he sees. It is not enough to have good eggs in your basket; you must find a market for them, and when you have found a market you must stand out for the top price in it. Do not be over-modest in appraising your wares. “Don’t be shy, my boy! don’t be shy,” said an American friend to me one day, “modesty is a lovely thing, lovely; but the modest man gets ‘left.’” There’s a deal of truth in it. Experience tells us that; and yet I confess to an old-fashioned admiration for the journalist whose enthusiasm in his work makes him forgetful of himself. With the man of glacial temperament—the person who is perfectly

safe from any dread of the verdict "death from enlargement of the heart," I have nothing in common. I like a journalist, young or old, who is, above all things, loyal to his ship, who would compass if not sea and land at any rate all he *can* compass, to gain a good thing which will make his paper talked about in honour next day. "The ship first" should be the motto all round the office. It is better than good policy—it is the right thing to do.

Of course this may be carried to excess. Take the case of a chief reporter in a town where public companies abounded. The reports of these concerns were regarded as of first consequence. The competing paper had three proprietors, all of whom had shares in the different undertakings, and, consequently, were frequently first in the field with the desired and valued reports, and had the *entrée* as well to the shareholders' meetings. The chief of the reporting staff knew well enough he could not compete under such circumstances, pointed out to *his* proprietors the only way of meeting the emergency, and, as they did not respond to his suggestion to take shares in the various interesting companies—sometimes the most interesting were "very bad eggs"—he took a holding in twenty-one on his own account, actually investing £1250 of his own money,

a sum far in excess of the total salary he had received in his situation, that he might make his paper equal to the other in commercial information. He did more—he made it better. This was his reward, for much of his money never came back to him. No chief reporter is called upon to do that; yet the spirit which prompted it is the spirit in which chief reporter's work should be done. Given that spirit, and the whole reporting staff will be stimulated by it to fresh and vigorous work which will do honour to themselves and to the journal they represent. Let that spirit be absent, and the staff will be content to do the daily appointments without any ambition to excel, with no effort at the bold initiative which marks a "live" staff, acting under a leader of enterprise and resource.

Occasionally it happens when the conscientious, earnest, industrious worker in the ardour of his nature gives his employer good measure, pressed down and running over, he gets his reward without asking, which is the sweetest part of it. That is the ideal Press life, and it is good for a man to think of it, yet it is not, as a rule, the road to fortune. The man who can fix his eyes on a certain height, and use each position he happens to be in simply as a step to get there—that

is the man who reaches "the top" in the newspaper world. Talent is much; tact is more; the two combined are everything. A man can get on with singularly little cleverness, if he possesses the faculty of making the most of what he has, and takes care that what he does is seen, whether it is read or not, of all men who have good things in their gift.

Do not let me be misunderstood. That is not my idea of journalism, and it is precisely the opposite of what I have both preached and practised. But there is no ignoring the fact. In our days it is more than ever "every man for himself, and the weak to the wall." And if the "practical journalist" means one who wants to "get on," he must get himself on by taking his further stride whenever opportunity offers. In these efforts he will be greatly aided by combining with his desire as perfect discharge of his duties as he can possibly give. He should never forget, whatever his position, that good work—that is, the putting of the best a man has in him into whatever he has to do—brings a sense of inward satisfaction greater than any recognition the most generous employer may make. In journalism, more than any calling I know, anything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well. The smallest paragraph can declare the man as plainly as

the leading article. He who is careful in "little things"—there can scarcely be said to be any "little things" in journalism—is certain to succeed in great things. It is the pride in doing work as work ought to be done, that grows into a habit, and becomes a second nature, which with the journalist is more precious than rubies. Young pressmen who make bad copy—striking out words, interlining, writing on the back, and adding "flags" at the sides—are on the broad road that leadeth to low position and life-long drudgery. They had better think more and write less. Certainly they should know what they are going to say, and have some notion of how they are going to say it, before they begin to write; and if the outcome of their meditation is disappointing they should not try to make it better by bungling alterations. The better plan is to tear it up and start afresh. The printer will then have "copy" a glance at which will not provoke him to say things which imperil his hereafter, and the author of it will acquire greater facility in putting the right word in the right place—a gentle art which once with a man never leaves him unless he wilfully thrusts it away.

Every year sees the power of the Press increasing. Its influence on the national life is incalculable. With

its rapid progress the responsibility of all associated with journalism increases. It is my firm conviction that the men who move this mighty machine of journalism to-day are, as a rule, honest, earnest, and even anxious to rise to the level of their great trust. There is no journalism like English journalism. It has its faults and it pays for them—smartly at times. Hedged in by severe laws, its conductors are sometimes restrained in their campaigns against roguery, and not infrequently their proprietors pay the penalty where they ought to receive the praise. Time, however, is on the side of what is best in the Press, and slowly but surely it is being emancipated from shackles which have made it impotent in the presence of organised fraud and hypocritical wrong-doing. When it is a recognised axiom in newspaper circles that the judge and the jury are invariably adverse to editors and publishers, it is not hard to perceive the attitude of past legislation towards the Press. But “the old order changeth and giveth place to new.” Enlightened public opinion is with the latter-day journalism—not the “New Journalism,” which seeks simply to be smart, and troubles little about truth and nothing at all about taste; nor the society journalism which battens upon backbiting and scandal-mongering, and serves up as its daintiest tit-bits the newest rumours

about impending "society sensations" and "forthcoming divorce revelations." There are not lacking signs, too frequently seen in the London correspondence of provincial journals, that scant encouragement would lead to this garbage getting into powerful country papers. But the conductors of our best journals have, to their honour be it said, no liking for the rakings of social sewers, and the pressman who would best serve his journal and his generation is the one who instead of *seeking* for a society scandal makes it his business to avoid it. There never was a time, even in English journalism, when the newspapers were so worthy of their mission. The British Press to-day is more influential than it has ever been at any period in our history. Pleasant it is to reflect that to-day, in a greater degree than in the past, purity and power go together. That is gratifying now, and hopeful of the future. It is the duty, as it is the privilege, of every journalist who is conscious of the part the Press plays in weaving the web of our national life, to see to it that his share is according to the desire and the design of those who hold the ideal of a National Press which shall reflect all that is worthiest in the home of the dominant race of the world.

Sheffield, August, 1895.

R. H. DUNBAR.

NOTE.—Although, at Mr. Phillips' request, I have written an introduction to his work, it did not strike me, after reading the portions submitted, that it really required anything of the kind. Mr. Phillips, who commenced his journalistic career with me when I was in charge of the reporting department, has written very plainly and clearly what has occurred to him in the course of his experience at Sheffield and in his present appointment. Intended as an elementary guide to journalism, the book contains much useful information which I should have been glad of when I made a start, and it is full of hints which those with the inclination and the requisite qualifications for newspaper work will find valuable. But there is one piece of advice all aspirants to press-work should ponder—very wild and exaggerated notions are entertained as to the salaries usually paid even to the ablest and most experienced men on high-class papers. Do not take to journalism in the expectation of either gaining fame or making a fortune by it. You will get more fame by taking the Queen's shilling, and if fortune is your object you will do much better as a brewer's traveller.

HOW TO BECOME A JOURNALIST.

CHAPTER I.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR PRESS WORK—SALARIES, ETC.

It is only within the last few years that reporting for the Press has come to be regarded as a profession. Little more than half a century ago, when newspapers were hardly to be obtained for less than sixpence, reporters were few and far between. But since then the newspaper Press has made great and wonderful strides, and to-day journalism, though the youngest of the professions, occupies a position of honour and influence which would have been next to impossible to attain by any other profession or calling in a similarly short period.

Of the many departments of newspaper work reporting has by far the largest following. A very rough calculation gives the number of reporters in the United Kingdom as about 8000. This result is arrived at by crediting each of the newspapers published in these isles with three reporters. It must not be assumed from this that three is the usual number of reporters attached to a paper. That is not what is meant. The great dailies have staffs of eight, ten, and twelve; evening papers have as many as from three or four to

seven or eight; but in the case of even a good weekly the reporting staff will not usually number more than three. There are numbers of weeklies which have no more than two, whilst in the case of many of the smaller weekly prints the whole of the reporting work is done by a staff of one. In giving three as the average, what is meant, therefore, is that if all the reporters in the United Kingdom were apportioned equally amongst the whole of the newspapers, three would, in all probability, be the number each publication would receive. The newspapers published within the confines of Great Britain and Ireland total up (1894) to 2304. Taking three reporters as comprising an average staff we get a total of nearly 7000, and if we fix the number of special and unattached reporters in London and the country at another 1000, we arrive at our estimate of 8000.

It will thus be seen that reporting is by no means a small and insignificant calling. On the contrary, it occupies a very high and deservedly important position, and is regarded as a recognised field of employment for intelligent and well-educated young men. And while its popularity is increasing its boundaries are every year becoming more and more extended. Every year sees an increase in the number of periodical publications, and as this naturally means more employment for journalists, it follows as a consequence that each year the demand for skilled reporters and writers for the Press becomes greater.

Naturally, the first question asked by a young man anxious to embark on a journalistic career is to seek to

know where and how he is to make a commencement. On this subject of "How to Get on the Press," articles without end have been written, though much of the "information" offered has been nothing but trash. As a general rule the writers of these articles suggest that the youth desirous of securing a situation on a local paper should feel his way, so to speak, by sending into the office of that particular paper little paragraphs of news, or notes upon local topics, in the hope that the editor will accept them and offer the writer a position on the literary staff. This sort of nonsense reminds one of the tale of the poor lad who stood on the steps of a bank, picking up pins, with which he pinned up the holes in his tattered garments. His industry and thoughtfulness arrested the attention of the bank manager who, after questioning him, took him into the bank and gave him a subordinate position. The good youth then grew up to be a partner and married the manager's lovely daughter. A humorous writer improved upon this story by another, in which a second poor boy picked up pins on the bank steps. But no manager came out and took him in, nor did the boy grow up to become a partner and marry the manager's daughter. No; he was simply given into custody for prowling around the bank premises without any visible business. Something very much like this will happen to the youth who sends paragraphs and notes to the average editor, who will regard him as a nuisance, and tell him probably that he pays men to do the work thus offered him gratuitously. Some few journalists may have commenced their career in this fashion, but the

ordinary youth may go on sending paragraphs for a lifetime and no kindly editor beckon him into a chair in the reporters' room.

Men get on the Press in the same way as other men enter other professions, by applying for situations, or by influence. If a youth desires to get into a newspaper office in his particular district, his best course is to either write or call on the editor or chief reporter and state his qualifications. Then, when there is a vacancy, he may possibly be remembered. If he is not particular about remaining at home, he may write round to as many newspapers as he cares to, and await developments. In the meantime he may advertise in the *Daily News*, or look out for advertisements in that same paper, and, by writing after everything he thinks likely, he may in time secure an opening. If he has any friends who are acquainted with newspaper people, he should get them to use their influence on his behalf. By these means he may finally secure a position on some local paper or other.

It is better first to try on a weekly paper. I think myself that a good training on a first-class weekly is far more serviceable than one on a daily. On a weekly paper there will be a staff of only two or three reporters, who, amongst them, will have the whole reporting engagements of the town to cover, the junior, of course, taking a fair share of everything. He will be required to attend the police courts, inquests, public meetings, the Town Council, School Board, Board of Guardians, and other meetings of elected authorities; will have to lend a hand at important political demonstrations, occa-

sionally sub-edit, and constantly be reading proofs—he will, in short, gain an insight into every department of newspaper work, and within a year from joining the staff will have tried his hand at every class of appointment known to a reporter.

But this will not be so on a daily paper. For the first year or so the junior will have little to do but make calls, attend unimportant inquests, and write paragraphs about peddling little chapel teas and school concerts. The door of the Town Council will be closed to him, and his only share in the work of a big political demonstration will be to sort the “flimsies,” sharpen other people’s pencils, and act, perhaps, as a messenger. On a daily paper, of course, where there is a large staff, the sub-division of labour is great. The sporting reporters deal with everything in the nature of sport; art, musical, and dramatic criticisms are done either by special men or by those members of the reporting staff who show particular aptitude for work of this nature; while *verbatim* reports and the business of such important bodies as Town Councils are rarely or never entrusted to men who have not done that class of work for years. This, of course, is not conducive to “bringing on” the junior, unless he be an exceptionally smart youth, with well-developed faculties of observation. If he be dull he will learn very little, and when put to an important appointment he will, in all likelihood, fail to grapple successfully with it, and will thus weaken his chief’s confidence in him.

For these reasons, then, a good weekly paper is to be recommended as the best training ground for a reporter.

The beginner will not start at much of a salary, but he will—and this is of even greater importance—have ample opportunity of making himself proficient in every department of reportorial work.

Amongst the qualifications requisite for a position on a reporting staff it is customary to place shorthand first, because it is *absolutely necessary*. Time was when a reporter could jog along very comfortably without knowing a word of shorthand. Those were the days when the reporters in Parliament used to sit in the Strangers' Gallery and write out their reports on their knees. They were absolutely ignorant of shorthand, and as they were not above supplying the deficiencies of their memories by drawing upon the resources of their imaginations, their reports were naturally anything but faithful reproductions of what had taken place. But nowadays all this has changed. The public want facts, and in the case of speeches they require the identical words used by the speaker, and as this end can only be accomplished by the use of shorthand, it comes about that a knowledge of the "winged art," as some people love to call it, is absolutely necessary.

Of all the systems of shorthand it is pretty generally conceded that Pitman's is far and away the best. It has been in use now over fifty years, and is written to-day, I believe, by ninety-three per cent. of the shorthand writers of the Kingdom, while abroad it has also a large following. Facts like these speak for themselves. As a system it may have its imperfections, as have all other systems; but for the purposes of

reporting, and of recording spoken words, it fulfils all the requirements expected from it. A youth of average intelligence may master it in a year without a teacher, and at an expense well within half a sovereign, so cheap are the text-books.

In later chapters the reader will find shorthand dealt with in its relation to the various departments of reporting work, but here a few remarks on the general question will come in fitly. It is necessary that a warning voice should be lifted up against that fallacious belief that a knowledge of shorthand is the sole qualification needed to enable a youth to become a successful reporter. It has already been said that shorthand is necessary to the reporter. In *verbatim* reporting—that is, reporting in which every word of a speaker is taken down and reproduced—shorthand is *absolutely* necessary, and at every class of appointment at which speeches are made, it is helpful and many times indispensable. The fact that shorthand plays such an important part in reporting has given rise to the belief that it is the *only* qualification needed, and it is sadly to be feared that there are even to-day many men on the Press who have not a single other acquirement or endowment to fit them for Press work beyond their ability to take a shorthand note. Of literary skill they have none; their intelligence is usually of a mean order, and their general knowledge small. To sum up, they are mere note-taking machines. They are everlastingly writing shorthand. At the Police Court they take notes during the whole of the sitting; at a meeting they “shorthand” every speaker, and it

is a fact that, in my own experience, I have seen men of this stamp carry their note-taking propensity to such a length as to cover pages of their note books with shorthand at such appointments as dramatic recitals and high-class concerts.

This has all arisen from this mistaken notion that if a youth knew shorthand he was good enough for Press work. In the early days of phonography much was expected from Mr. Pitman's invention, and it is only fair to say that it stood the severe tests applied to it, and fulfilled all that had been claimed for it. *Verbatim* reports became the rule, and any man who could boast of a proficiency in the art was sure of securing a situation and supplanting those old paragraphists, who, up to the date of Mr. Pitman's invention, had done the greater part of the reporting for the Press. And so shorthand came to be considered the chief qualification for Press work, and it is to be feared that in many instances indeed it was the only one. We are now getting to a healthier state of things. The long and dreary reports of a few years back are being shelved to make room for the descriptive summary and the interesting "special"; and though shorthand is still as useful and necessary as ever it was, it nowadays is by no means the only qualification a reporter should possess.

At the last conference of the National Institute of Journalists, Mr. Thomas Allen Reed, the veteran shorthand writer, put this view of the matter to the front very forcibly. Shorthand was *essential*, he said, in the reporting department. So long as the public cared to read the utterances of statesmen of high rank,

so long must newspapers continue to report them, and for this purpose shorthand was a *sine quâ non*. But though shorthand was essential, he ridiculed the idea entertained by many young men, who think that the mere fact that they can write shorthand is sufficient to fit them for reporters. The then president, Mr. P. Clayden, a member of the editorial staff of the *Daily News*, agreed with this, and put it that a reporter was a man who must have a very considerable acquaintance with the subject he had to report upon. Unless he had an acquaintance with the subject-matter, very serious mistakes would probably occur in his copy. The accuracy with which reporting was carried out in this country arose from the fact that as a rule chief reporters were men of considerable culture, and were therefore able to accurately record literary quotations, or the name of some literary person to whom the speaker might refer, whereas an ignorant man could not report them accurately. It was just the same with politics. How, he asked, could a man go into the House of Commons, and make a report on a political question, if he did not understand what the debaters were talking about?

This is exactly the point I wish to emphasize. Shorthand is absolutely indispensable to the reporter, but if it is his only acquirement, he will stand a very poor chance of making headway in his profession.

It is a rather difficult matter to know what qualification to place second to shorthand. Mr. Percy Russell says that "the working journalist must, as occasion arises, be a lawyer, a clergyman, a soldier, a police-

man, a man of sentiment, a practical philosopher, an artist, an architect, a man of science, a statistician, a merchant, a stockbroker, an engineer, a critic of painting, music, and old china, and, not to catalogue too far, he must be the Protean genius of contemporary life in its many activities and in all its multifarious phases." This is perhaps a pardonably over-drawn picture, a slightly exaggerated estimate of the intellectual equipment of the average newspaper man. But in the main it is more or less correct—the working journalist *must know a little of everything*, and the term working journalist, of course, will include the newspaper reporter. He should be a wide reader, a careful observer of life, and a diligent student of the newspapers. I think it was Lord Wolseley who once remarked to the effect that he derived more knowledge of the world and general information from the newspapers than he received from his scholastic course; and every man who follows the newspapers with an intelligent interest will have an opinion not far removed from that of the famous soldier.

In addition, a reporter should be a man of rare resourcefulness. This is a quality indispensable to success. Perhaps in no profession or walk in life is a man thrown more upon his own resources than in journalism. There have been times in the career of all journalists of experience when they have held very important secrets—when they have had information in their possession which, if published, would do some individual perhaps great and lasting harm—when a slip of the pen almost would plunge their paper in a libel action,

or in other ways have far-reaching effects for good or ill. It is at such a supreme moment that your trained journalist—the man who is a journalist to his fingers' tips—shines to the best advantage. It is at such a moment that the experience of years becomes concentrated and crystallised into one decisive thought, which impels him to action and marks out clearly and unmistakably the course he should best pursue. A journalist should be able to think quickly and act decisively. He should possess almost unlimited resources, ready perceptions, and a penetrating judgment—should have the faculty of judging for himself, and of putting his judgment into execution without delay or appearance of hesitancy.

To sum up, therefore, the qualifications for a reporter, he must be a good shorthand writer and a youth of many and quick resources; he must be well educated, well read in every subject which he will see noticed from time to time in the newspapers; he must have common sense and intelligence, and decided literary inclinations. Thus equipped he may hope, by giving every attention to his work, and by continually storing his mind with fact and information, to one day become a fully qualified and successful journalist, ever bearing in mind the pregnant utterance of wise old Johnson, that “the greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading, in order to write.”

In the way of books the young reporter should have a small library of reference works. In all first-class offices the literary staff have all they require of books of this description, but in some poor offices a well-

thumbed dictionary will be found to be the only reference work available. To begin with, then, the reporter should have his own dictionary. Other works he should endeavour to obtain are "Haydn's Dictionary of Dates"; a small encyclopedia (Beeton's or Blackie's are the cheapest); a copy of the current issue of "Hazell's Annual;" concordances to the Bible and Shakespere, and a dictionary of quotations, such as Wood's or Bartlett's. Other works which may be included are Dr. Brewer's dictionary of "Phrase and Fable," Lempriere's "Classical Dictionary," and dictionaries of the French, German, and Latin languages, as the tongues most met with after English. He will find all these works useful to him either for verifying a quotation or supplying him with information upon some point or other upon which he is lacking in knowlege.

And what, it may be asked, are the rewards held out to youths who fulfil all these requirements, and stand on the threshold of the newspaper world, ready to adopt the Press as their profession? In other words, how does journalism compare with other professions in the matter of remuneration? To answer very bluntly, in the case of many reporters the immediate rewards are few and the remuneration is disgracefully low. If the aspirant for a position on the Press thinks he is going to get a high salary he is very much mistaken. As a profession, journalism, particularly in its lower branches, is very much underpaid, and the men who have most to complain of on this score are without doubt reporters. To many a youth a more desirable

profession than reporting could not well be imagined. It may seem very nice to be able to attend the theatres, concerts, balls, gatherings, shows, and all the social engagements of modern life, free, and be attentively looked after as a kind of privileged being; to be in at everything; to know everybody and to be familiar with all that is going on, both before and behind the scenes. This is one side of the picture, and it is the side presented to the public. But there is another side—that of the hard-worked Pressman with rarely a minute to call his own; here, there, and everywhere; working away day after day, perhaps, into the small hours of the morning, and making a working week far longer than that of any other professional man or artisan, and in many a hundred cases, at a less wage than a mechanic or skilled labourer. It is an unpalatable truth that journalists are underpaid, and the youth who enters the profession in the belief that he will be paid the salary of a bank manager, aye, or even of many a bank clerk, will find out his mistake on being brought face to face with the unpleasant reality.

Of course, salaries vary. On large daily papers the reporters, as a rule, are well enough paid. A junior may commence at anything between nothing and £1 a week, and after he has arrived at man's estate he will, if he be a good reporter, receive a salary ranging from £2 10s. to £5 per week, according to length of service and individual worth. On dailies the reporters' salaries range between these figures, the chief of the staff often receiving £7 or £8 per week. In addition to this there is the income from correspondence (to be dealt

with in a later chapter)—generally no insignificant sum on a daily in a large town—and the scale of expenses, from both of which sources the reporter may expect to add to his wage. So that on a good daily the reporter has not much cause for complaint.

But in the smaller towns the pay is by no means so good. Juniors usually commence without a salary, and the ordinary reporters rarely receive more than 35s. or £2 per week. Some few there are—old servants, or men of exceptional value to a paper by reason of their vast local knowledge—who may receive more than this last-named sum; but it would be safe to estimate the salary of the average reporter in small towns at 35s. Here, as in the larger centres, there is a certain amount of correspondence to be obtained, but small newspaper proprietors are sometimes opposed to their reporters “lining” for other papers, and, by reason of the fact that the reporting market is over-stocked, they are able to ride the “high horse,” and threaten with dismissal those of their staffs who may endeavour to supplement their small wage by a little correspondence for other journals.

It will be seen from what I have written that in the lower walks of journalism the prospect is not attractive. The pay is decidedly poor, though as against this there is always the chance of a reporter being elevated to something higher and better. It is but a short walk from the reporters’ room to the sub-editor’s room, and thence to the editorial chair is little more than a step. The higher the ladder is ascended the better the remuneration becomes, though even then it does not

compare favourably with some other professions. Mr. James Payn recently told us that during thirty-five working years he had, from literary and journalistic work, made an average income of £1500 a year, though he had been exceptionally fortunate in the way of editorships and readerships. Against his earnings he put the salary of a bishop or judge, who would each get £5000 a year and a retiring pension. As Mr. Payn says, the income of a literary man, or the successful journalist, cannot be compared with the gains of law, physic, divinity, or commerce.

There is hope that in the near future the Institute of Journalists will do something for its provincial members in this matter of small salaries. It has, as Mr. Mackie says, enabled the public to know and understand that the working journalists of England consider their profession one for educated men, and that they mean to protect it as such. The best way to do this, and at the same time "elevate the status of the profession," will be to secure to every working journalist a wage which will enable him to live like an "educated man."

And yet reporting is an agreeable occupation, and few men would care to relinquish it, or, at all events, to retire from journalism altogether, after getting well into the stream. The work is agreeably varied; it introduces the reporter into every section of society, and shows him human life in every phase and under every aspect. The magic word "Press" is the *open sesame* by which newspaper men are admitted behind the scenes of everyday life, and by which they see and hear much that is denied to ordinary members of the

community. And there is a fascination in the work which every reporter feels—a fascination born of the Bohemian-like nature of the life he leads, and of the thought that the work of his hands will provide material for comment and discussion, thought and study, in a circle wider than that to which the pulpit or the platform, unaided by him, can hope to reach.

Reporting, therefore, has its drawbacks as well as its advantages, but, withal, it is an agreeable profession, and to the young man whose disposition and attainments fit him for Press work, he will find it an ever varying source of interest and instruction. Let him have ability and application, united to a determination to get on, and there is open to him an avenue full of unlimited opportunities for advancement and promotion; and if he makes the most of these opportunities the fault will indeed be his if he does not succeed in making his way to a respectable, if not affluent, position.

CHAPTER II.

PARAGRAPH WRITING.

As Mr. Percy Russell has remarked, "The humble paragraph is the base, the unit, and the initial of all newspaper work." The newspaper, the magazine, and the book are all made up of so many paragraphs, and in the writing of these as much skill is demanded as in composing long articles and chapters. For what, indeed, are articles and chapters but a succession of paragraphs placed one after the other, each continuing the narrative or unfolding the idea contained in the previous one?

In earlier days newspapers were largely made up of paragraphs, as distinguished from long articles, and the tendency to-day is to get back somewhat to the earlier style. The great impetus given to newspaper enterprise by the repeal of the stamp duties, the extended use of the telegraph, &c., saw the humble paragraph crowded out to make room for the brilliant and dashing descriptive article, or the "verbatim" of the up-to-date reporter. But nowadays we are getting back to the paragraph. Editors and writers for the Press have found out that there is room for it, and,

furthermore, that there is a demand for it. For evidence of this, one has only to turn to the columns of the London or leading provincial dailies, where will be seen any number of paragraphs, large and small. Some will be under distinctive headings, others in the "summary" columns, and others, known to journalists as fill-up pars, at the foot of many of the columns of news.

Look at the "summary" column, for instance. Here you find a succession of small pars, ranging in length from two to twenty or thirty lines, into which the whole of the contents of the paper—or, at any rate, the most important features—are condensed in the briefest and most readable style. The "summary" column of a first-class daily paper nowadays gives the reader a bird's-eye view, as it were, of the morning's news, and tells him, in the fewest possible words, of what is going on in the great world around him. These paragraphs are usually models of perspicuity, and in some instances are the work of men who are engaged solely to write them. On many dailies, and on all weeklies, the summaries are written by the editor or his assistants, though in some offices it is the rule that the local summaries shall be written by the reporters, each man doing the summary of the work he is engaged upon.

It is not only in the "summary" column that the paragraph occupies an important position. The London dailies now have, as a step further in the direction of giving the day's news in essence, a column which is intended to serve the same purpose as the

"London Letters" which bulk so largely in the provincial papers. The *Daily News* has a couple of columns headed "This Morning's News;" the *London Telegraph* gives a similar amount of space to what is headed "London Day by Day;" and so on. These columns are filled with smartly written paragraphs in which the chief events of the day are described and commented upon, as the case may be, in forcible, readable English; and, if you were to watch the ordinary daily purchaser of these papers, you would observe that he invariably turns first to these columns. After reading these, and the summary, one has really the pith of the day's news at command.

Then on the provincial papers we have the local columns, and in these quite a different style of paragraph is found. Here, the odds and ends of the day, or week, are served up in paragraph form, the great advantage of these columns being the fact that matters too trivial to be dealt with in article form may be mentioned in half a dozen lines, or more, according to their worth. The local news columns are the mainstays of many papers, and every effort is made to get into them paragraphs of every little incident that is worth the space and treatment. So fully alive are some editors and chief reporters to the value of "locals," that it is a standing instruction to the staff to make as many of them as they can. For instance, suppose a reporter were dealing with a matter worth, say, four sticks, and there was a standing rule in that office that "locals" should not exceed three sticks in length (a stick is twenty lines of minion or ordinary newspaper type) he

would in all likelihood cut down his paragraph in order to ensure its insertion among the "locals." If it is there, he knows it will be seen and read; but if it has a full head and is set in article form, it may possibly be relegated to some obscure part of the paper where half its value will be lost. Hence the order, in many offices, to make as many "locals" as possible.

It will be seen from all this that the paragraph plays a very important part in the filling up of the modern newspaper, and the intending junior reporter should make every effort to acquire skill and proficiency in the art of paragraph writing—in the art of turning out in crisp, readable paragraphs, accounts of the thousand and one little things he will have to write about in the course of his career as a reporter. At first the junior will have very little to do but write paragraphs of concerts and small social gatherings, items from the police office, such as accidents, fires, &c.; tea-meetings, presentations, religious services, and the hundred and one oddments which go to make up the local columns of a daily or weekly newspaper.

Tact is required in order both to write these pars and to get the information upon which they are based. In the case of some journalists there seems a kind of innate knowledge as to the facts required for the purpose of writing a particular paragraph. The novice need not be at all dismayed if he finds at first that he does not possess this desirable faculty. If he has anything at all about him it will come with added experience and widened knowledge. What I am referring to is the faculty which enables a journalist to go straight to the

root of a matter, and to decide in his own mind what he requires to enable him to deal properly and completely with the subject he has in hand. If he is sent out after a death, say, he knows, when interviewing the friends or relatives, exactly what information he needs, and is at no loss to ask for it. The same with every kind of reporting appointment—he knows just what information to obtain, how best to secure it, and then how to present it to the reader in the most telling and fitting manner. In setting out to “work up” anything the reporter should carefully weigh the matter over in his mind and determine what he wants, and then, when opportunity occurs, he should remember the “heads” of his subject matter, and see that he secures the desired particulars. This will help him in the collection of information, and will in addition conduce to habits of thoroughness and accuracy.

After securing the information then comes the writing of it in paragraph form. My first word of advice would be to be succinct and brief. Though brevity, so far as paragraph writing is concerned, can hardly be said to be the soul of wit, it points to something equally as good and desirable—it shows the writer to be possessed of intelligence and sound common sense. Make sure, as I have already pointed out, of what you are going to write. That is to say, have the facts well at your fingers’ ends and, before putting pen to paper, marshal them carefully before you in your mind’s eye, in the order you wish them to appear. Then, when you commence to write, do not lose sight of your facts. Remember them, one by one, and place them on paper in order and

sequence, in the same way as though you were telling the facts to a friend, though in writing you aim at a literary rather than a colloquial or conversational style. Select the words which best express what you wish to convey, and go straight to the root of the matter. Avoid long words and foreign phrases, except where absolutely necessary. Our English language is still good enough for the ordinary requirements of newspaper articles, though there are some reporters who seem to think otherwise. Such men, by their frequent use of quotations from the French and other languages, only show the poverty of their own minds, and the slenderness of their knowledge of their mother tongue. They do not delude anyone into the belief that they are linguists—we know full well that their oft-quoted Frenchisms are taken from the latter part of a dictionary, where they have been hunted out for the purpose. Such a proceeding is but food for the writer's foolish vanity, and reminds sensible men of the fable of the jackdaw in the gorgeous feathers dropped by the peacock.

Another thing to be avoided is the habit of making long sentences, which are troublesome to the reader and a source of danger to the writer. Do not be sparing of your full points, and eschew "ands," "whiches," "buts," &c. Their tendency is to prolong sentences to a length at which they become clumsy and wearisome. Aim at brightness and crispness, with telling brevity. Some men can write a page without a full point, and do it well, too. Buffon, on occasion, could turn out sentences of two hundred words or more, without tiring

his reader or mixing up his meaning; and I recently came across a sentence in one of Milton's prose works containing 210 words, and it would be almost impossible to improve it by cutting it up, which is one of the best of all tests which can be levelled at a long sentence. But we cannot all be Buffons and Miltons. What in the hands of a practised user is a means of delight, is an object of terror when wielded by a novice. Therefore, avoid long sentences, and put away all temptations to make them. They are bad enough in an article, but are altogether fatal to the beauty and symmetry of a paragraph.

Still another thing to be avoided is the mentioning of unnecessary facts. The charm of a good paragraph is that it contains nothing superfluous. Take up a "summary" paragraph and strike out any one sentence, and you will immediately see what I mean. You will almost invariably find that you have destroyed the sense, and rendered the paragraph incomplete. In your own writings it is always well to go through them afterwards and strike out everything not absolutely necessary. By doing this frequently you will in time acquire proficiency in writing smart "pars," and if you have a tendency in the direction of prolixity you will find that the continued exercise of the blue pencil upon your own matter will in time work a wonderful improvement.

And even as I have written this caution against long-windedness, there is the cultivation of too much brevity to be guarded against. Say all there is to be said—don't make paragraphs incomplete by the omission of

important details—but in avoiding long sentences do not fall into the error of writing them too short. If you do they will be jerky, jumpy, and the idea running through the matter will not be presented to the reader in a continuous form, but in a succession of gasps and jumps. A good sentence is like a level railway track—you glide over it with ease, speed, and comfort. A long sentence may be compared to a series of alternating curves and junctions, where every faculty has to be strained to keep on the metals; while a paragraph of short and disconnected sentences may be likened to a train off the metals, bumping and jolting along over the sleepers.

To write good paragraphs, indeed, is an art not easily acquired. To some men it comes naturally; others, even after years of practice, never write them well.

I consider the following a model of what a paragraph should be—short, concise, and to the point. There is no exceptional literary skill evinced in its composition, nor does it treat of a matter of great importance. It was written by a country correspondent for a paper with which I was connected, and passed through my hands in the ordinary course of my duties. I was able to give it out without making a single alteration or striking out a single word:

HEATING THE PARISH CHURCH.—The adjourned meeting of the members of the congregation of the Parish Church, to consider the question of heating the Church, was held on the evening of the 23rd instant in the parochial schoolroom. The Rector, churchwardens, sidesmen, and a few others attended. The committees who had inspected the

systems of heating used at and Churches presented their reports, after which it was unanimously decided to request the firm who had put in the apparatus at Church to send in a tender for the work, on receipt of which the whole matter would be submitted to a future meeting.

This, I say, is a good paragraph for a country correspondent, and one which would not bring disgrace upon any reporter. Some writers would have told us that "So-and-So" was asked to take the chair, on the motion of "So-and-So;" that the meeting opened with prayer, or the "usual devotions;" that "So-and-So" said how pleased he was to be there; and so on, until they had spun the thing out to over half a column, when they would have told us that the "meeting closed in the usual way;" or that "votes of thanks concluded the meeting;" or, again, "that the Rector pronounced the Benediction, and the proceedings terminated." There is nothing of this in the paragraph given above. Though there is nothing fine or artistic about it, it has the great merit of containing nothing but fact, and fact absolutely essential to give the reader a fair idea of what took place at the meeting. And to do this—to rid his paragraphs of all purposeless verbiage—to make them at once full of meat and full of interest, should be the aim of every reporter, junior or senior.

Another popular fallacy among young writers is that which leads them to pepper their writings with long words, in the belief that by so doing they are showing off their great attainments. This is a mistake. Long

words are frequently a necessity, and in the hands of a practised writer can be used almost anywhere with safety. But to a novice they are a source of great danger, and if he does not mind they will trip him up. The chief thing to be avoided is that of using words with the meanings of which you are not thoroughly conversant; and even when you are well acquainted, both with word and meaning, it will do you no harm to pause and reflect a while, and then endeavour, if the word is a long one, to find a smaller and simpler one which will serve the purpose as well as, or even better than, the one you first intended to use.

It is said of the late Lord Tennyson, who had perhaps as great a grasp of his mother tongue as any man of the century, Ruskin not even excluded, that in revising his poems in proof, he was in the habit of striking out long words derived from Latin and other foreign roots, and putting in their places short words with Saxon derivations. And what Tennyson did may be done with profit by any junior reporter.

With regard to grammar and punctuation, I need say but little, as there are so many books which deal exclusively with these topics. Punctuation I regard as of great importance, though it is wonderful how much it is neglected, even many first-class writers leaving the "pointing" of their matter to the printer's reader. A good little work on punctuation is that written by Justin Brenan, though, as in the case of Cobbett's Grammar, the author thinks every writer other than himself a fool. His book may be read with profit, though the whole of it may not be digested with

advantage to the reader's style. For instance, Brennan pours the vials of his scorn upon the harmless semicolon, and asks for nothing less than its utter abolition, suggesting the dash in its place. But this is impracticable almost, and is the suggestion of a man who has conceived a violent dislike to the "semi," mainly, perhaps, because other writers have recommended it. "Teachers" of this stamp need to be guarded against. When a man is so violent in his denunciation, and uses language marked by such acrimony and bitterness as deface Brennan's chapters, it may fairly be assumed that he is writing as much from prejudice as from honest conviction.

My catalogue of "things to be avoided" is not yet exhausted. I have just room for a word or two on repetition. Among many reporters, and particularly the younger members of the profession, there is a marked disinclination to use a leading noun or verb more than once in a paragraph. This is all very well in its way, but it is pushed to a ludicrous extent, and has given rise to a style of writing detestable to a cultured mind.

Suppose a paragraph of a street accident had to be written by one of these gentry who abhor repetition, and the facts were, in brief, that a horse and cart had tumbled down in the roadway. He would first allude to the horse as the "horse," then as the "quadruped," then as the "animal," then as the "suffering beast," and, finally, perhaps as the "poor creature;" then, having exhausted the range of his vocabulary, he would return to the "horse," and go through the whole list

again, though probably using this time a little variation in the order. The same with the cart, which would, in all probability, be honoured first by receiving its proper designation. Afterwards, however, it would be "the vehicle," the "conveyance," and so forth; these small witted creatures actually taking the trouble to turn up dictionaries in order to find out different renderings of the words they are dealing with.

This style of writing cannot be too severely condemned. It is childish and utterly ridiculous. Repetition is undoubtedly wearisome, and, if allowed to be present to any great extent, it will weaken the style and rob otherwise good passages of their beauty and smoothness. But there is no sense in the style of composition affected by some writers, and outlined, perhaps in rather an exaggerated manner, in the paragraph preceding this. Avoid repetition as much as possible, but do not allow yourself to become a slave to the foolish and pernicious habit of ringing the changes upon a given selection of words. Rather than do that it is far better to use the same word over again, or twice over, if need be. Never hesitate between the choice of using a word a second time or substituting for it another which will not harmonise with the body of the sentence. The course is plain—use the same word again. Do not be led away into the practice of changing your leading words at every other line, but when occasion demands it, never be frightened of falling into the "sin" of repetition. It may be bad, but it is by no means so bad as the silly custom I am now writing against, which is like a "bogie" to those

poor creatures who are perpetually striving after variation, even at the expense of their style.

I have now said enough, I think, to show that the art of writing paragraphs is one of the most important acquirements the youthful reporter should possess, and I think I have given sufficient hints to enable such a one to create for himself a style which will give credit to himself and pleasure to his readers. In forming your style, read the grand old masters of our English tongue, watch carefully the paragraphs and articles which appear in the best journals, compare them with your own, and appropriate to yourself those improving features which you think your own writings lack. Then, in course of time, you will yourself be able to produce matter which will contain all the elements requisite for your success as a writer of readable English.

Just a word on the subject of handwriting. It does not necessarily follow, because a few of our greatest writers would have failed in an examination in the elementary principles of penmanship, that an illegible "fist" is a sure sign of literary genius. There are some journalists who through sheer inability write copy which can only be deciphered with the greatest difficulty, and there are others who imitate them in this respect, sometimes out of mere carelessness, and in other instances, it must be feared, because they think that illegible copy will stamp them as men of superior ability to their more painstaking brethren of the pen. There is very little excuse for bad writing. With the exercise of care it is as easy to many men to write

plainly as illegibly, and when they fall into the habit of writing in a slovenly manner, it is because they are careless and indifferent. Compositors are credited with the ability to read anything, and it is certainly a fact that there are some veterans who never stumble, not even when "setting up" from the vilest scrawl. But this is no excuse for giving out bad copy. Good writing is insisted on in many offices, and even where not insisted upon, the reporter will find it to his advantage to give the compositors no trouble through the illegibility of his writing. The great majority of the mistakes which appear in newspapers are traceable to bad writing, and if only for the avoidance of these, it should be an inducement to the young journalist to acquire an easy readable style of longhand. In the case of names, good writing is even more important than in the case of ordinary matter, for whereas in the latter case, the context and general sense will materially help the compositor to discover what is meant, in the matter of names the context will be of no service whatever. Hence the importance of writing names plainly. In the case of a name like "Bousfield," many reporters would write it in such a fashion that if the compositor did not know it, he would in all likelihood set it up as "Bonsfield," as being the commonest name of the two. In such instances, and in all cases of words of uncommon spelling, it will be found profitable to spell them out in capital letters, thus, BOUSFIELD. Many a foolish mistake will, by paying attention to the foregoing hints, be avoided, and the young journalist will be spared that annoyance

which comes from seeing specially-important matter marred by a glaring error on the part of the compositors, who, by mistaking the writing of the reporter, have perhaps turned pathos into bathos, or made a fearful hash of the names of, say, a few of the leading local magnates, necessitating an apologetic correction in the next issue.

In the matter of what have been called the "technics" of newspaper work, I will just outline a few points which it is very desirable every young journalist should know. The paper upon which the reporter writes his paragraphs and articles is known as "copy" paper, and the matter, when written, becomes "copy." After the copy leaves his hands it usually passes under the review of the chief reporter or a member of the editorial staff, and then is sent into the composing room, where the compositors—generally spoken of as "comps"—set it up in type. In setting it up they use what is termed a stick—a box-like arrangement held in the left hand—into which the type is placed, letter by letter, line by line, until the stick is full, when the type, now known as "matter," is "emptied" on to a galley, the length of a newspaper column. Then a "proof" is pulled, and it is "read." The copy is held by a boy or junior reporter, and the proof by a more experienced hand. The two are then compared, in order to find out mistakes, the proof corrector marking on the proof the mistakes made by the "comp." Then the proof is handed back to the compositor who set it up, and he corrects the matter in the direction indicated by the marks made upon the proof by the corrector. Afterwards a second proof is

pulled, and is known as a "revise," and is compared with the first proof in order that it may be ascertained whether the corrections have been rightly made. When all the matter is set up the galleys are emptied on the "stone," an iron table upon which the paper is made up. The columns of type are placed side by side on the stone, in the order in which they are wanted to appear in the paper, and then a square iron frame, known as a "chase," is placed around them. Wedges, called quoins, are inserted between the type and the edge of the chase, and the whole is then wedged tightly together, a process known as "locking up." The page then becomes a "forme." If the paper is printed from the type, the formes are placed upon the machine and printing operations may at once be commenced. Should the paper be printed from plates, an impression is first taken of the type in the forme, and from this a casting is made in lead, the casting, otherwise "plate," being placed on the machine instead of the actual type.

The marks used in correcting proofs should be familiar to all young reporters. They may be learned in half-an-hour in a newspaper office. They are set out with great clearness in a useful little work named "The Writing-Desk Book," and are also to be found in several of the best dictionaries and press directories.

CHAPTER III.

REPORTING INQUESTS.

THE inquest is one of the most important appointments to which the junior can be sent. The advantage of an inquest is that it furnishes a wonderful amount of experience and an almost endless variety. No two inquests are alike. The circumstances of the death are different, the witnesses are different, the evidence is different. In one case it may be a sudden death from heart disease; at another time a fatal accident at a manufacturing establishment; the next day a suicide, and later perhaps a murder. One day the junior may have to listen to medical evidence, abounding with technical terms, detailing the result of a *post mortem* examination; the next day he may be confronted with the evidence of experts as to how a chain snapped, in the case, say, of a crane accident; while an hour or two later he may be mystified by a colliery manager or deputy, talking, in technical language, of the thousand and one strange things encountered in a coal mine. It is very evident, then, that to do an inquest properly the junior must have his wits about him, and be possessed, at the same time, of more

than average intelligence, and certainly of average information.

The inquest is an ancient institution. Coroners are mentioned in a charter as far back as 925, and were first appointed for every county in England in 1275. At that time their powers were considerably more than they are now. The present-day coroner has only one duty—to inquire into all uncertified deaths, and satisfy himself and twelve of Her Majesty's subjects that such deaths were due to natural causes, or, if violence, to place the responsibility for that violence upon the shoulders of the person or persons who caused or inflicted it, directly or indirectly.

There their duty ends, but in fulfilling it they have a large measure of authority vested in them. They are, to all intents and purposes, masters of their own courts, and may please themselves whether they admit the public or not. It does not seem to have been ever actually settled whether a coroner has the right to exclude journalists from inquests. He may refuse to admit the public, but it is a moot point how far his powers enable him to turn away representatives of the Press, who only seek and ask for admission in their capacity as representatives of the public. On some few occasions coroners absolutely refuse the Press admission, and in other cases, when they think the circumstances ought not to be published, they have been known to hold the inquest at unlikely hours and places in order to prevent the Pressmen hearing of it. In the offices of many coroners slates and diaries showing the appointments of the day are open to the

inspection of the reporters, but it has been found easy to omit from the list particulars of an appointment at which it was not thought desirable that the public journals should be represented. But as a general rule reporters will find it a matter of great ease to secure admission at all inquests. The majority of coroners are kindly disposed towards journalists, and difficulties and friction between the two need never be feared so long as the reporter keeps his place, and only makes known those facts which ought to be given to the public.

Before proceeding to make any observations in the way of saying how an inquest should be reported, it will be of use to the reporter if he is told exactly what an inquest is and why and how it is held. In the first place, it is pretty generally known that before a body can be interred there must be an order for burial from a surgeon who can certify that death is due to natural causes. Failing such an order, either through the surgeon not having attended the deceased in life, or through death being due to violence, the coroner has to be called in to take the matter up and find out the exact circumstances of death. Suppose a man is discovered dead in bed, and no doctor can be found to give a certificate authorising burial, or suppose the case be one of suicide, murder, or accident. The police are called in, and the coroner's officer—generally a constable—is by them made acquainted with the facts. He obtains all the information he can, and presents it to the coroner, who, after examining into the case, decides whether an inquest is necessary or not. If death is due

to natural causes, and there is no appearance of anything suspicious in the circumstances surrounding the death, he will give an order for burial and declare an inquest unnecessary. But should the case be one of accident, murder, or suicide, he will order his officer to make the necessary preparations for the holding of an inquest. In the case of accidents inquests are always necessary, even when the details are plain and show that no one can rightly be blamed for it. This sometimes appears ridiculous, and borders upon farce. But it is the law, and there is no getting behind it. If a man falls down in the street and breaks a leg, is taken to an infirmary or his home, and dies, it may be a year or more after the accident, there will have to be an inquest. It is a death from violence, and the coroner will have to hold an inquiry before he can give an order for burial.

Inquests are held at Coroners' Courts—where the towns provide them—and failing them at the Town Hall, or at publichouses, and in these latter cases the coroner usually pays about 5s. for the exclusive use of a room. Twelve jurymen are needed by law, though as a matter of convenience, it is advisable to have more. It may be necessary to take an adjournment, and in the interval one of the jurors might die, or be taken ill, and so be unable to attend at the resumption of the inquiry. This would cause great difficulty, and so, to obviate such a disaster, a few extra jurymen are usually summoned. And there is another reason why a jury should consist of more than twelve men. When a verdict is to be given the signatures of twelve jurymen are required to it. If the jury only consisted of a dozen men, and

one of them disagreed with the verdict and refused to sign, the coroner would be in a fix ; but having thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen jurors, he can do without the signatures of one or two, or even three, dissentients.

Before the inquest opens the jury view the body—a disagreeable duty which is gradually being omitted. Then, assembling in the room where the inquest is to be held, they select a foreman and take the necessary oaths. The oath administered to the foreman runs something like this :

You shall diligently inquire, and a true presentment make, into all such matters and things as shall here be given you in charge, touching the death of _____, now lying dead, and of whose body you have had the view, and a true verdict give, according to the evidence, to the best of your skill and knowledge, so help you God.

The foreman kisses the book, sits down, and the jury are then sworn as follows :—

The same oath which John Smith, your foreman on this inquest, has now taken on his part, you and each of you severally swear to keep and observe on your part, so help you God.

Then the evidence is taken. The first witness is usually a relative or friend to identify the body. Then follows the more material evidence—that which the reporter has to watch carefully. In the case of a sudden death, a few words only are needed to put the facts in a dozen lines or more. In the case of an accident more is needed, while in the case of a particularly interesting suicide or murder *all* is needed—that is to say, all which bears upon the case—the wheat and

not the chaff. The reporter must watch each witness carefully, take notes in his book, and store up the leading incidents in his mind, until he gets sufficient to write out the case in proper newspaper style. In writing out he should remember that he is writing for the public, who only want facts, and interesting facts at that. If he himself is unable to follow the case and pick up the points, he must not adopt that fatal plan of writing out what he knows and leaving the rest alone. People have to read that report when it appears in the paper, and if it is foolishly incomplete or egregiously stupid, they will laugh at it, and the journal in which it appears will suffer. The careful, accurate, painstaking reporter will, if in doubt, leave out, but, if the omission would spoil the report, he will never be too proud to approach the witness who mystified him, and seek from him, after the inquest, information upon the point which bothered him. Here is the difference, it may be, between success and failure.

There is another reason why the evidence at inquests should be carefully watched. Inquests are very uncertain. The case may appear very plain, and the verdict may seem so easy as to be guessed beforehand. But suddenly one witness makes a statement which completely alters the aspect of the whole affair. He may be a surgeon, describing a *post mortem*. There is a trace of poison—evidence of a blow—the natural death becomes an unnatural one. The reporter pricks up his ears, and takes notes for dear life. In the end it may turn out to be suicide, murder, or manslaughter. But if the reporter has not paid attention to the first part

of this witness's evidence, he will not know how to lead up to the important statement which so altered the complexion of the case—how to introduce it in an intelligible manner. If it is a case of accident, a witness may ascribe blame to someone, and the coroner may direct the jury to return a verdict of manslaughter. If the reporter has not carefully followed the facts of the accident—how it happened and what caused it to happen—he will not be in a position to tell the public, who will, unless he seeks aid, read a manslaughter verdict and see no evidence to warrant the jury in coming to such a decision.

It will be seen, therefore, that what is wanted is the ability to grasp the points of the case—to master the facts. This can only be done by a diligent training of the faculty of perception and observation. The reporter *must*, above all things, observe. His brain must be charged with fact and information, stored there as he listens to evidence, to be drawn upon when wanted. Nothing should be too trivial to be noticed—nothing too unimportant to be acquired. It is only by this that evidence—at inquests and all other appointments at which witnesses are examined—can be properly understood and a faithful reproduction of its main details be placed before the public.

There are more than a few ways of reporting evidence at inquests, but, generally speaking, there is only one way of writing out the introduction. The opening lines may be put something like this:—

This afternoon, at the Town Hall, the Downshire Coroner (Mr. ———) held an inquest on the body of William

Thomas, aged 35, railway shunter, of ———, who was killed on Wednesday afternoon whilst working on the line near ———

Then, of course, will come the evidence. Some reporters, no matter how small and trivial the inquest may be, will persist in giving the evidence in paragraph form. That is to say they take the name of each witness, place it at the commencement of a new paragraph, and say something like this:—"John Smith, engine driver, in the employment of the ——— line, was the first witness. He said: My name is John Smith, and I live at ———row," and so on, giving everything the man says, in first person. This is nonsense, and only the dullest reporters on the oldest of weekly papers think of such a thing. If the inquest is on a murdered victim, or the body of a Prime Minister, all well and good. The importance of the case demands for it special treatment, and anything in the first person always reads more important than it would if written in the third person. If you want to give the evidence in paragraph form in small and unimportant cases, do it in the third person, and *only give those facts which have a direct or indirect bearing upon the death* of the person on whose body the inquest is being held. There is no need for anything else, and the public will not thank you for it. Avoid that silly line after the introduction—"The following evidence was then taken." A statement of this character is childishly superfluous. It conveys no new information to the reader, for the simple reason that if you give the evidence it follows that it was "taken."

The best way to deal with an inquest is to write it out in narrative form. Inquests of great importance require, of course, extended reports, and require, too, that the evidence of each witness shall be set out in paragraph form, so that the responsibility for every statement may be fixed upon the person who uttered it. But in the ordinary small cases a narrative is by far the best, for it gives the reader, in a few words, a clear statement of fact, and presents to him a word portrait of the incident the reporter is dealing with denuded of all redundant matter. Here is a case in point:—

DEATH ON A DOORSTEP.—AN OLD WOMAN'S SAD END.—An inquest was held on Saturday afternoon at the Town Hall, by Mr. —, coroner, on the body of Mary —, aged 59, wife of Isaac —, of 20, —-road, labourer at the —. The deceased died very suddenly last Saturday morning. She was a woman who had enjoyed fairly good health, and that morning her husband, when he went to work, left her in bed, apparently in possession of her usual health. Her son Samuel left to go to his employment about eight o'clock, when she was having her breakfast in the kitchen. Two hours later a lad named —, in the service of a farmer and milk dealer, whilst going his rounds, found her sitting on her doorstep in the backyard. She was sitting on the bottom step, with her head leaning back for support on the third step from the ground. From her appearance, — came to the conclusion that she was dead, and asked a neighbour to go to her and give her attention. The poor woman, who was dead, was left there while her husband was fetched from work, and then she was taken upstairs. When found she had in her hand a pair of scissors, leading to the inference that she was on her way to the garden when she was attacked with the seizure which caused her death. Her clothing was wet, and she had

evidently been on the doorstep an hour or so. There was no suspicion whatever of death being due to anything but natural causes, and the jury had no hesitation in arriving at a verdict to that effect.

This is probably not the best paragraph I could have selected, but it was the first that came to my hand, and I give it because it illustrates what I am trying to make clear. This same inquest appeared in another paper in paragraph form, with the absurd line, "The following evidence was then taken," at the end of the six or seven lines of introductory matter. My contention is that the paragraph given above is by far the best of the two reports. You have the facts, and you have them in a readable form. Given in the other way, first person paragraphs, you have to read the evidence of *all* the witnesses before you are placed in possession of the circumstances of the woman's death. In the narrative form the reporter has taken in the facts in their crude state, and has evolved from them a paragraph in which the reader is told all he wants to know in the easiest and pleasantest manner. More than that no reader requires, nor is any reporter expected to do more.

The sum and substance of what I have to say on reporting inquests may be compressed now into a very few lines. Watch carefully the evidence, get as much of it in your head as possible, and in writing it out aim at furnishing your reader with an interesting narrative of the circumstances of the case. Try to acquire the habit of writing out as the proceedings go on, having your copy paper before you, on which you write the story of

- the case, and your note book on your left, in which you will jot down names and addresses of witnesses, and the salient points of their evidence, so that if required you have them at command without troubling anyone for what it was your duty to secure for yourself.

CHAPTER IV.

POLICE COURT WORK.

MOST junior reporters have their fill of police court work during their first few years on a newspaper staff. On a daily paper, indeed, in a large town, the young reporter is kept pottering about in the police courts a very considerable portion of the time he is on duty, and a rare good training ground it is, too. In the case of a weekly the junior will probably have to attend the police court at its every sitting, though on occasions, when special business is to be taken, he may generally count upon having by his side an older and more experienced member of the staff, this affording him an opportunity of seeing how his seniors deal with the more important cases that occasionally come before the police court.

There can be no mistaking the fact that the police court is an admirable school of experience. I knew a chief reporter who sent his juniors down to the courts every morning when there was nothing else for them to do. They were not marked for the court, and they were not responsible for the work. What they had to do was to merely take a seat at the reporters' bench

with their seniors, watch carefully what was going on, and afterwards read in the paper the reports written by the reporters in charge of the court. By this means they saw how things were done—how points were seized and brought out, and how unnecessary details were quietly ignored. Any man who attends a police court for any length of time and pays attention to the way the business of the court is conducted will in time acquire a fund of valuable experience and a useful smattering of legal knowledge. Apart from this the work is varied and full of interest, though the interest will perhaps wear off in a few years and the reporter will come to speak of police court work as dull and monotonous. This it may be to one who has spent half a lifetime at it, but to the novice it is full of interest and instruction, and will be to him one of the most pleasant and profitable appointments for which he can be marked.

There is little about an ordinary police-court that needs describing. The court is either presided over by a stipendiary magistrate (a paid magistrate, who does nothing else but transact the judicial business of the court), or, if the town is not large enough to afford a stipendiary, the business is left in the hands of the ordinary unpaid magistrates, who are guided in the way of truth and justice by the magistrates' clerk, a solicitor who takes charge of the clerical work of the court, and is frequently called upon to assist the magistrates with his legal knowledge and experience of the administration of criminal law. The magistrates' seats are at one end of the court, in a

raised space set apart from the rest of the room. Collectively, they are known as the Bench, while the one of their number who presides is termed the Chairman. The clerk sits immediately below them, in a position which enables him to turn round and confer with the Bench without any trouble. Near him will sit the chief constable, superintendent, or other officer of police in charge of the police business, and at the same table are usually to be found the solicitors or barristers who may be engaged in any of the cases set down for hearing. The reporters are provided with seats and writing accommodation in some convenient spot about the centre of the court, where they may hear and see all that it is desirable they should.

The cases brought into these courts range in importance from the familiar "drunk and disorderly" to "murder," the list between these two extremes including, on occasion, nearly every charge known to the criminal law. The persons who are brought to court to answer the various charges preferred against them are either "prisoners" or "defendants." It is important that this distinction should be learned early, or it may lead the young reporter into serious difficulty. A prisoner is a person who has been arrested by a constable on any charge whatever, has been detained at the police station, and is brought up in custody. "Prisoners" are placed in the "dock" (if the court has one)—a little railed box—but "defendants" are not usually compelled to suffer that indignity. "Defendants" are those persons who come to court to answer charges preferred against them either

by the police or private individuals. If a police case they are summoned because the offence was not of sufficient gravity to warrant the extreme step of arresting them; if a private case the charge may be almost anything—from a neighbours' quarrel to a dispute between wealthy manufacturers over a trade mark. In all these cases the word "defendant" must be used when speaking of the accused, whilst the one who prefers the charge against him should be styled the "complainant." It is absolutely necessary that this distinction should be known and acted upon; otherwise, the reporter will stand a very good chance of bringing himself and his paper into serious difficulty.

Suppose the first name on the magistrate's list is, say, that of a "drunk and disorderly"—an ordinary police case. The name of the offender is called out, and on answering to it the owner is led up to the place assigned for those answering charges. After stepping into his place the charge is read out to him, and he has the privilege of pleading either guilty or not guilty. If "guilty" the case is merely proved and a decision given; if "not guilty" it is gone into with sufficient fulness to enable the Bench to come to a conclusion. First of all the policeman who has the case in hand steps into the witness box and states the facts. Then witnesses are called in support of the constable's statements, the defendant having the power to ask any questions of them he may think likely to help his own case. He then makes whatever statement he may have to make, and, if he has any witnesses, calls them, the police having the same liberty to cross-examine his

witnesses that he had to question theirs. After all the evidence has been tendered the Bench announce their decision, and immediately another case is brought on, to be dealt with in the same way.

This, then, is an ordinary police case. The charge itself may, as I have said before, vary from drunkenness to murder, but the method of procedure adopted is practically the same in all the cases which come before the court. In reporting them everything depends upon the style of the particular office in which the young reporter is commencing his career. In some offices none, or at all events very few, of the small things which come into the police courts are reported at all. This is particularly the case on daily papers. But on country weeklies one of two courses is usually adopted. Either the most interesting cases only are reported and the others ignored, or else *all* are mentioned, the lesser ones receiving but a line or two and the more important being given as much space as the reporter may think they deserve.

Speaking generally, very little police-court matter is required, and what is needed is obtained very easily, as will have been apparent to those who have noticed carefully what I have already written. The name of the offender you get by hearing it called out; the address, the nature of the offence, and the circumstances under which it was committed you have in the statement of the policeman and his witnesses; while the defendant's answer to the charge is found in his statement to the Bench, and in the evidence of the people he brings to substantiate his own declaration. Everything the

reporter needs is therefore to his hand, and if it should happen that he is not sure of the name and address of the defendant, or of the wording of the charge, he can generally count upon borrowing the summons or the charge sheet from the clerk, or upon obtaining the necessary information from the constable interested in the case.

The court authorities and the police are, as a rule, always willing to give information of this character to the Press. In some courts, charge sheets containing all the initial particulars are supplied to the reporters, and in others they are allowed to copy from the books in which these matters are entered. On the other hand, there are occasionally met with churlish or consequential officials—generally either only young, or old and “crusty”—who do none of these things, but make a boast of taking no cognisance of the Press, and refuse to help them in any way whatever. But these people are few in number, and there is generally a sure way of bringing about an improvement in their behaviour to the newspaper representatives. The most effective is to appeal privately to some influential and sensible magistrate.

Police court work is simple and straightforward enough. Ordinarily newspapers have a standing headline, such as “Police Intelligence,” “Police News,” “The Courts,” &c. In writing out his copy, the reporter has simply to give this headline, then state the day, and give the names of the magistrates present on the Bench. Then write out the cases, commencing with the name and address of the offending person,

the nature of the charge, and then the details of the case, winding up with the sentence. Where a headline such as the one I have mentioned is kept standing, the following would do as a typical commencement :—

POLICE INTELLIGENCE.

TOWN HALL.—MONDAY.

Before the MAYOR (Ald. JONES), and Messrs. BLANK, BLANK, and BLANK.

After this would come, of course, the various cases which were heard at the court, each with a crosshead in capitals, as the following :—

THEFT OF A WATCH.

John Smith, labourer, Water-lane, was charged with the theft of a silver watch, the property of William Barnacle, carpenter, of Sun-street, on the 16th inst. The theft was committed on the occasion of the recent Civic procession in honour of the jubilee of the Incorporation of the Borough. Barnacle was standing on the footpath in Market-street, watching the procession pass by. He was in the midst of a rather dense crowd, and suddenly felt a pull at his watch chain. Looking down he saw that the chain was hanging from his vest pocket, his watch having been detached from it. A commotion in the rear caused him to turn hastily round, and he then saw a man energetically elbowing his way out of the crowd. He raised an alarm and the man was stopped, the watch being found in an inner pocket of his vest. The thief was immediately given into custody. Prisoner pleaded guilty and had nothing to say. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment with hard labour.

This is a specimen of an ordinary police paragraph. For many papers it would be quite long enough,

though on some weeklies, where local events are chronicled at great length, much more space would be devoted to it. The evidence of Barnacle, the prosecutor, would be given in a paragraph to itself, and so would the statements of those persons in the crowd who seized the thief and prevented him getting away. But, still, even then no further instruction need here be given how to lengthen out a case, because it is merely a matter of giving in several paragraphs the whole facts of the theft, which I have summarised in the example given above. It does not necessarily follow that the bald headline selected should be given either. There is room for any amount of smartness in creating striking and effective titles. A better headline than "Theft of a Watch," would be "A Reminiscence of the Jubilee," or "Stop, Thief!" or something equally calculated to arrest the attention and cause the report to be read.

Great attention should be paid to the choice of headings for police and all other reports. The reporter who sends news from his district to the large daily papers published in the adjoining town knows well the value of a catchy headline. When the parcels of news are heaped up on the sub-editor's desk at 9 or 10 o'clock at night, when column after column of "flimsy" is coming over the wires from London, and when his own reporters are sending up matter sufficient to almost fill the paper, it is a great temptation to drop the whole lot into the wastepaper basket without even looking at it. But the average sub-editor will open every parcel on the off-chance that in one of them there will be something it would be ruinous to miss. At these

times the paragraphs that are accepted are those with distinctive headlines, which inform him of the nature of the matter, and which save him the trouble of reading every line to see whether there is anything out of the common before him. The same with the average reader of the newspapers. Many people only read the headings, and therefore a sure way to create interest in the news you have to offer to the reading public is to dress it up in an attractive garb and embellish it with a heading which will so interest the reader as to compel him to pause and go through the whole report.

As I indicated earlier, there are many cases of importance to be reported other than those brought forward by the police. Summons cases are frequently of greater moment than those in which the police are concerned. Whereas in the latter instance we may only have, say, a petty offence against the criminal law, in the former case we may have a prosecution which raises some vexed point of law and becomes of very great importance. A manufacturer may summon another in the same line of business as himself for infringing his trademark. Obviously such a case would be of first importance, and a full and complete report would be necessary. A corporation may summon a dairyman for watering his milk, a grocer for selling chicory as coffee, or margarine as butter, a builder for permitting a nuisance on his property, or the authorities may seek to put into force some old and forgotten statute, such as that, for instance, under which barbers are fined for shaving on Sunday. All cases of this description are of importance, and though

they are reported in exactly the same way as police business, they are mentioned here to show the reporter that he will occasionally have something to face much more difficult than a common "drunk and disorderly."

From the police court cases are sometimes sent up to the sessions and the assizes. The method of reporting them at these more important courts is just the same, and a reporter who is well up to his work, who can take a good note and write an intelligible transcript, condensed if required, need have no fear of following his cases to the sessions or assizes. The surroundings will be a little more awe-inspiring than those he is familiar with at the local court house, and the proceedings will be marked by more "pomp and circumstance" than he is accustomed to, but the reporting work—and this is the main thing—will be practically the same.

There are one or two things to be guarded against in reporting the business at police courts. Excessive note-taking should be avoided. Nothing looks worse than to see a reporter taking notes for dear life during the hearing of a petty little affair which can be dismissed with profit in half a dozen lines. In the first place, it is foolish, and in the second place, it is a waste of time and trouble. If the reporter is young, and he is taking the notes avowedly for practice, all well and good; there is nothing to be said against it. But there is nothing an old and experienced reporter dislikes more than to sit beside one who is in a hurry about everything, and who takes voluminous notes of everything which transpires. Such note-takers have generally a glaring

deficiency of all sense of proportion—the veriest trifles are magnified into matters of first importance. The fact that a thing is spoken is to them an all-sufficient reason why it should be duly entered in the note-book, and the fact that it is there entered is proof that it ought to be written out again. If not, indeed, of what use are pencils and note-books?

The reporter should take as many notes as he thinks needful, and if he understands his work he will not think a verbatim note of everything necessary. The memory should be brought into play as well as the pencil and note-book. A reporter who is only a mere shorthand writer, who takes notes of everything said, will find that his notes will be in the way. Instead of being a help to him they will be a hindrance. If he has only a column to write of a case which lasted an hour or two, he will have on his books notes for three or four columns, and he will have to laboriously read through all these to pick out the points and facts of interest. Ordinarily police cases may be written up in longhand as they are proceeding, and if the reporter has an open note-book by his side in which he can jot down facts which are rather in advance of the point he has reached in his written matter, he need never fear being left. Certainly the habit of writing out should be cultivated rather than the slavish practice of taking notes which will never be used, but be a positive hindrance.

Another thing to be guarded against is the insertion in police reports of statements of a libellous character. These literally abound, and great care has to be exer-

cised in order to prevent them finding their way into print. It should be remembered that the character of every man who stands up in a police court to answer a charge is at stake, and in a very large measure the reporter has it in his power to do that man an injury, it may be by writing too much or too little. In common fairness both sides of a case should be given. However brief the report is, its brevity should be no excuse for the omission of facts or details which will place the case before the public in its proper light. It is grossly unfair to give the facts against the defendant and leave untouched those which tell in his favour. It is a common thing to see the case for the prosecution outlined with more or less fulness, and then to come across the line, "Witnesses were called for the defence," without even indicating, sometimes, what the line of defence was. It was once held to be a libel on the part of a newspaper which published a report of the first day's proceedings in a criminal case, and made no reference whatever to the second day's trial, when the prisoner was found "not guilty."

In making statements which concern people's characters too much care cannot be taken to ensure accuracy. In a police case it was once said of a woman charged with a small theft, that she had been before the court on previous occasions for a similar offence. As a matter of fact she had been to court before, but not for anything more serious than drunkenness. Therefore, the paragraph did her an injustice, and as she made some stir about it the editor of the paper in which it appeared gave her a small sum to settle the matter.

She may not have had a case against him, but in the hands of an unprincipled solicitor—and there are such, ever ready to prey upon newspaper proprietors—she might have put the editor to a much greater expense in defending himself from lengthened and vexatious proceedings.

“Accuracy” should therefore be the watchword of the young reporter—the guiding principle of his newspaper life. He should never print a statement unless he could prove it up to the hilt if called upon.

CHAPTER V.

COUNTY COURT, BANKRUPTCY COURT, AND OTHER LEGAL WORK.

THE average reporter does not display much enthusiasm towards the county court. It is by no means a pleasant appointment. In the first place, the work is generally much more complicated than that of the criminal courts; and in the second place, the county court itself is so fearfully dull and uninteresting. A more miserable appointment cannot be well conceived than that of the reporter in a stuffy county court on a hot summer afternoon, when some uninteresting and intricate case, involving points of law without end, is dragging its weary length along. The case seems confined to the counsel, the witnesses, the parties to the suit, and (perhaps) the judge, who may perchance be waging a heroic battle with those soporiferous influences which are nearly always such marked features of the county court. However, county courts have to be attended, and though the work is not always pleasant, it has to be done.

County courts rank among the oldest legal institutions we have, dating as they do from a time anterior to that of King Alfred, of glorious memory. The main

purpose for which they are now used is the recovery of debts, and for securing damages in cases of negligence, assault, breach of contract, or any other similar cause. England is divided into so many county court districts—sixty, I believe—with one or more courts for each district, each court serving a particular centre of the district to which it belongs. Each county court district is presided over by a judge, who goes from one court to another at stated intervals, in order to thoroughly cover the whole of it. County court judges are paid well. They are usually selected from among the front-rank barristers, and they do not practise or do work other than their judicial duties. The judge of a county court is addressed as “Your Honour.” In newspaper reports he is spoken of as “His Honour Judge Smith,” cut down, in case of repetition, simply to “His Honour.”

They are assisted by registrars, who deal with the initial business of the court, fix the cases in the order in which they will be brought forward, deal with the fees, &c., and have also the privilege of sitting to hear minor cases without a jury. Another official is the bailiff, who executes the orders of the court in such matters as selling up the goods and chattels of persons who may refuse to pay what the court has decreed.

As I have already indicated, the principal business is the recovery of debts. Drapers, grocers, house owners, furniture dealers, jewellers, and other tradesmen who let out their goods on credit, are entitled to sue in the county court those of their customers who do not pay

up with that promptness which to the tradesman is so desirable a feature of business. In large towns and busy centres, where there is a mass of other and more important work, these small debt cases are taken before the registrar. As a rule they are not very important, and need little reporting. But there are times when even debt cases assume a very important aspect, and are worth reporting fully. Sometimes they show a remarkable faculty for swindling on the part of people who have obtained goods without even means or principle; and sometimes the boot is reversed, and it is the tradesman, or the money-lender, who finds himself held up to the scorn of the court for a series of tyrannical exactions before which the usurious Jew of the novel and the stage is the embodiment of mildness and leniency. When these cases do occur—*report them fully.*

Apart from this feature, debt cases are ordinarily of little consequence to the public. On some papers they are not reported at all, but should the reader be on a country weekly, where the custom is to report everything, he may take it that a very few words will suffice to explain what is needful. The name of the defendant is called out, and he steps into the box or space reserved for those answering charges. Then the tradesman, or party suing, known as the plaintiff, or his solicitor, states the circumstances under which the debt comes to be owing, gives the amount, and asks for an order to be made upon the defendant for the payment of so much per week or month. The defendant, after this, makes his statement, then his Honour

inquires into his position and ability, or inability, to pay, and then gives his decision, making such an order as commends itself to his judgment. Here is everything the reporter needs, and it is only necessary for him to keep a strict watch on the case as it goes along, in order that he may pick up any remark which will lead to anything of special interest in the direction I indicated earlier.

This habit of watching cases is one that needs to be cultivated. An ordinary case lasting, say, half an hour, would run to a couple of columns or more if reported *verbatim*. But, as a matter of fact, the case may be compressed into anything between a stick and a column, and in so compressing it the great point to be observed is to see that all the facts which bear materially upon the point at issue are brought out clearly and impartially. A good reporter will be able to sit writing out the case as it goes along and yet keep an ear open for any fresh point of interest which may crop up, and the moment this occurs he will turn from his half written report to his note book and at once put down the matter which has arrested his attention. This gives a man confidence in himself, and leads to the cultivation of habits of observation, which are very useful indeed. Only take notes of what is necessary, and leave the unimportant details alone.

The more important cases which come before the county court judge are those which relate to breaches of contract, damages for injuries, and the like. The points raised in these cases are sometimes of very great interest. A man claims damages from a railway

company for, say, sustaining injuries through falling whilst leaving a train which has stopped, but afterwards moved on a little; or a company may sue a passenger for the excess, say, between a special fare and an ordinary fare in consequence of his having broken the bye laws under which they issued special tickets for special trains. Such a case as this would be of interest. Witnesses would be called on either side; there would be the examination in chief and the cross-examination, long addresses from the counsel for each party, and possibly quotations from previous decisions in similar cases. By reading reports of county court business the reporter will see that this is but one (a sample) of hundreds of cases of importance. In some of them not only are points of law raised, but points of fact which require technical and skilled evidence to settle them.

I read in the papers a few weeks ago a case of a technical nature which will serve to show what very important questions are sometimes raised at the county Court. It was an action by a manufacturer—an electroplater, I think—against a firm of machine makers, who had supplied him with a machine which had not done the work he alleged it ought to have done. Technical evidence was called on each side, and finally the judge got in a little pet and declared that it was abominable that he should be compelled to listen to technical evidence which he did not understand, when half-a-dozen experts could have settled the matter amongst them in the same number of minutes. But what that county court judge grumbled at is what reporters have to do

nearly every day of their lives, and they cannot adopt the plan of the judge and complain about it. They have to get over the difficulty the best way they can, and they have to present to the public an account of all the technical matters which will be so general as to interest the average reader, and yet which will show such a grasp of the technical points as to make it intelligible to the expert. This is no easy task, and it requires that every faculty the reporter has should be brought to bear upon the facts of the case as they are unfolded during the hearing, and if any statement should be unintelligible to him, and yet should be necessary to make the report clear, he should always take the first opportunity of interviewing some person connected with the case who will be able to give him the information he seeks.

To report county court business properly is no easy matter. Very wide knowledge is essential. There are hundreds of legal terms which all reporters should be familiar with. These, together with their shorthand outlines, may be acquired from Sir Isaac Pitman's shorthand books at less cost than trouble. Then the reporter must, as I have already pointed out, be thoroughly wide awake, and must bring to bear upon his work all the knowledge and intelligence he possesses. The opening statement of counsel must be taken, and sufficient given to indicate the nature of the case. The main facts of the evidence tendered by the witnesses must also be given, and when any important admission is wrung from them by the opposing counsel, this must be given too. The speech of counsel for the

defence must be outlined, and the principal points of his witnesses given, and then the summing up of the judge, which may be treated on its merits. Then, of course, you have the judgment. If it is deferred say so. This means that the judge is going to take time to think over the matter, to read the evidence, and to hunt up the law on the question at issue. But take care when the judgment is given that you are there, and that you give sufficient of it to make it clear to all who have to read it. In fact, when reporting deferred judgments it is as well to look up the case as you gave it the previous week, and just indicate in a little introductory paragraph an outline of it. Make sure before you are leaving the court that you have the judgment correct, and if you are in doubt do not think of coming away until you have cleared it up, either by speaking to one of the counsel or seeing the judge himself. This last step, however, should only be adopted when everything else has failed, and when it is positively necessary that you should have some doubtful point explained.

The work of the Bankruptcy Court relates exclusively to cases of bankruptcy. Like county court work it requires great care and attention paying to it, if it is to be done well and accurately. When a man fails and his affairs pass into the hands of the Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, he is, in course of time, summoned to attend a meeting of his creditors, presided over by the Official Receiver. To these meetings reporters are usually admitted. A statement of the debtor's affairs is read by the Official Receiver, the creditors make their

remarks upon it, and the debtor is frequently called upon to offer explanations for many things he did before coming to court. Lively "scenes" are sometimes witnessed at these meetings, creditors "heckling" the debtor for information which he perhaps will not give, and it is absolutely imperative that if these incidents and remarks are reported at all they should be recorded faithfully and accurately. A *verbatim* note-taker of average intelligence has nothing to fear, but to a man whose shorthand is faulty and deficient, the work will present difficulties and pitfalls at every step.

At a later stage of the affairs of the debtor he has to attend the Bankruptcy Court for his public examination, and his deeds and misdeeds are very carefully inquired into by judge, Official Receiver, and representatives of creditors. Here again the work is plain, and if closely followed there is nothing from which the junior reporter need fear trouble. It should be mentioned, as a guide to the reporter, that a debtor is not a bankrupt until he has been adjudged one. Till then he should be styled the "debtor."

Other legal work includes arbitration meetings, Chancery courts, and the civil, or *Nisi Prius* Court at the Assizes. Arbitration meetings are very rare, and little need be said about them. An arbitration case is one where two parties cannot agree on a given point, and consequently call in the aid of a third party. A corporation, for instance, may want to purchase certain property for street improvements. The price they offer is rejected by the owner, and the matter is referred to arbitration. The case will be dealt with

very much in the same manner as a county court case. Counsel will represent both parties, speeches will be made, and witnesses examined, and the umpire—in this case an independent individual well versed in property values—will give a decision, which will be as binding on either side as the verdict of a jury, and the judgment of a judge at an Assize Court. As this work is so much like ordinary law court reporting, nothing more need be said about it.

Chancery Courts hardly come within the scope of a junior reporter's duty, as they are only held in such centres as London, Manchester, &c., and are so important that only experienced men are sent to them. As to the *Nisi Prius* Courts at Assizes the work is of a character very much akin to that of county courts. Only civil actions are tried, breach of promise, libel, appeals, &c., and the method of reporting these is exactly the same as that of other legal reporting.

In dismissing this subject I feel bound to repeat the advice already given on the subject of carefulness and accuracy. It is in the power of all men to possess these qualities, which are desirable enough in all, but they are absolutely indispensable to every reporter who enters a court of law in the performance of his duties. It is, as I have before pointed out, only by the cultivation and exercise of these qualities that a reporter will succeed, and will avoid falling into silly errors and stupid blunders.

CHAPTER VI.

PUBLIC MEETINGS, ETC.

REPORTING meetings is, perhaps, the most frequent appointment the ordinary newspaper reporter will find come in his way, and some think that even as it is the most varied work so is it the most interesting. Certainly to a man of wide discernment, one who can appreciate the ever-varying types of human character, going about from public appointment to public appointment will be one of the most interesting and instructive experiences his newspaper life will afford. No matter whether it is the ordinary meeting of an elected authority—a Town Council or any other of the numerous councils now in existence—or a public meeting of whatsoever nature, he will usually find in it something new and entertaining—something that will add to his knowledge of mankind and the world, and increase his store of information. If for no other reason than this, what we may term the public side of a reporter's life is generally considered to be the most interesting.

In dealing with this class of work, I will take first a Town Council, as being, perhaps, the most represen-

tative type of an elected authority. I need hardly mention that a Town Council consists of a body of men elected by the ratepayers to look after the business of the town and see to its good government. At the Council meetings reporters are usually provided with sitting accommodation in a position where they can hear, if not see, all that transpires. The method of reporting the meetings varies very much as to detail. In large towns, on dailies where space is valuable and limited, the business of a Town Council is reported in brief only. All the points are given; all the decisions of the Council are given; all the important facts are given, and all verbiage and twaddle are rigorously shunted—in short, all the “meat” is selected and offered to the reader, and everything that is waste, or “froth,” is left alone. In smaller towns, where the meeting of the Council is the biggest event of the month on the reporter’s diary, it will naturally be reported at greater length. All the speeches are given, and very little of the spoken matter will undergo that process known to reporters on more important papers as “boiling down.”

Council meetings are held under the presidency of the Mayor. The first business is usually to receive the minutes of the last meeting, and then will come the correspondence received by the Mayor or Town Clerk since the date of the last meeting, and any other incidental or special business. At about this stage the minutes of committees will be brought up for approval. To understand what this means it is perhaps necessary to remind the youthful reader that Town Councils are,

for administrative work, split up into committees, each of which has its special work to do. Thus, for instance, one committee, the Watch, will have charge of the police and fire-brigade arrangements; another will look after the health of the town; another after the highways; another after sanitary matters; another after the water supply; another after the gas, electric light, and so on. During the month these committees meet and transact the business of their respective departments, and then, at the full meeting of the Council, their minutes of transactions come up to receive either the confirmation or disapproval of the whole Council.

Very important questions are sometimes hidden away in these minutes, and the discussion upon them may be alternately sharp and pointed or desultory and wearisome. When each committee is called out the chairman of that particular one moves the confirmation of the minutes, generally alluding, in an explanatory speech, to any important matter they may chance to contain. After they are seconded the fun usually begins. If the minutes are in accord with the feeling of the Council they are passed, but should it happen that they contain a clause which does not fall in with the views of any one member of the Council there will be delay in passing them, if they are passed at all. A member has the privilege of moving that the whole of the minutes, or simply the obnoxious clause, be referred back to the committee, meaning to give the committee an opportunity of reconsidering their decision, and of bringing their minutes into line with the feeling of the Council,

or of the objecting member. The importance of the subject, and the policy of the paper in favouring long or short reports, will be a better guide to the reporter in helping him to a decision as to the space to be devoted to the various items of Council business than any amount of abstract instructions.

There is one thing, however, which I may here press upon the attention of the young journalist. Do not be led away into the belief that a thing is important simply because a good deal of talk is uttered over it. In all such bodies as Town Councils, Guardians, School Boards, &c., there are to be found men, who, like an individual written of in Scripture, love to be heard for their much speaking. These men should be carefully watched, and should invariably be treated on their merits. They are the men who are always on their feet—always asking questions and always making speeches. I have such a person in my mind's eye as I write. He has something to say about every little matter that comes before the body of which he is a member. He is always disapproving of this, or supporting that, and cannot let the smallest matter pass without delivering a speech. He is chairman of a committee, and when he introduces his minutes he will say, apologetically, that there is nothing in them to which he need draw special attention, and then, forsooth, he will take each item separately, and dwell upon it with unction, not concluding until he has exhausted the patience of the whole of his colleagues. This man is but a type of others to be found in nearly all public bodies,

and the way to do them justice is to only report what they *should* say—not what they *do* say, which would very often extend to pages of unreadable rubbish

There is nothing difficult in the way of reporting the deliberations of these public bodies. As a rule the minutes are printed and circulated in advance of the meeting, and the representatives of the Press may with safety count upon receiving copies. They should be read before going to the Council meeting, in order to grasp the main points of the business to be brought before the meeting, and to master the names of places and persons likely to be mentioned in the course of the speeches. This is almost a necessity, as without securing this information in advance the reporter will often find himself in a difficulty. He may not recognise a name mentioned by the speakers, and if there are several names introduced, and he is not familiar with them all, he is liable to get mixed up, and have much difficulty afterwards in filling up blanks. A reporter should have the business of his town at his fingers' ends, as it is a matter of the utmost difficulty to report intelligibly subjects with which the reporter is not thoroughly conversant.

In commencing a report of a Council meeting it should be stated, in the opening paragraph, when it was held, who was in the chair, and, if the names of those present are given, they should come in here. Following this formal opening there should be a cross-head, in capitals, for every subject of importance

brought before the meeting. Thus, supposing the Council are in correspondence with the Local Government Board over some town's business, and a letter has been received since the last meeting, it might be introduced in this fashion :

THE MAIN STREET IMPROVEMENT SCHEME.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD OBJECT.

After these headlines would come, of course, the letter, and then the remarks of those members of the Council who spoke upon it. Important letters from such sources as the Government should always be copied. Very often copies have been taken in advance for the members of the Council, and one of these may generally be obtained. If not, it is as well to ask the Town Clerk to allow a glimpse of the original, and if the reporter is at any time in doubt he should never think of returning to his office without clearing it up and setting himself at rest.

The same practice of introducing headlines should be followed throughout the report. It breaks the matter up, and makes it look less solid and heavy, and much more attractive. In the case of every committee whose minutes provoke discussion, a headline should be worked in, either giving an indication of the nature of the matter following, or, if this cannot be done, the name of the committee itself will serve as a heading. It will be a bald and colourless one, I frankly admit, but in any case it will be better than a long array of fact-laden speech—serried battalions of heavy lines of black type, with a repelling and

unbroken front. Lord Rosebery once declared that people who read speeches in the newspapers only read those portions of them where they see the word "laughter" in parentheses. There is a good deal of truth and sound sense in this, and it should serve as a hint to reporters to make their reports as light and attractive as possible.

I do not think that I need dwell more upon reporting the meetings of these elected bodies. Boards of Guardians, School Boards, and the several Councils now in existence are all dealt with in the same way, and the general remarks applied to the Town Council meeting apply to them all.

And now to turn to public meetings. As I have pointed out earlier, the work at ordinary public meetings is fairly easy, though varied to a wonderful extent. Whether the meeting be political, social, philanthropic, or religious, it will present no great difficulty, except in special cases. The time and place of the meeting, its object, the name of the chairman, and the names of a few leading people present, generally suffice for an opening, and after that will come the speeches, given more or less fully according to space and instructions. This is all plain sailing, and there is nothing at which an experienced reporter would be alarmed. But to the young reporter a public meeting of any size is a fearfully important affair, and he approaches it with considerable alarm and anxiety. This is perhaps due to the fact that young journalists have very little sense of proportion. By that I mean that they do not possess the valuable faculty of being able to gauge the

importance of any given speech by the mere test of hearing it.

Here is the difference between an old and a new hand at reporting. Send two such men to a political or town's meeting of which a column is wanted, and observe the difference in their methods of work. The old hand will pull out his copy paper and his note-book, and whilst the hall is filling up and the platform occupants are finding their way to their seats he will have written his introduction and given a headline or two to his matter. Then, as the chairman opens the meeting and proceeds with his speech, he will be writing out a long-hand summary, only stopping to jot down in his note-book an odd statement or two made by the speaker a little in advance of the point the reporter has just reached in his copy. And so on with every speaker. The consequence of this would be, under normal conditions, that if the meeting lasted two hours he would be entirely written up by the time the chairman had declared the proceedings closed. Or if not quite finished he would very likely have little more than a stick or two to write when he reached the office, which would only mean another few minutes' work. In the office of a daily paper this practice of writing up at appointments is compulsory. The exigencies of a daily paper require it. If a very long report is needed more than one man is sent, but if the report has not to exceed a column it is a fair night's work for one reporter. But if, every time he was marked for such appointments, a junior came in the office at ten or half-past without a line written, it would not be long

before his place was filled by a man with greater energy.

Now a novice would not have treated his meeting in this style. He would have taken copious notes during the whole of the proceedings, with the result that by the time he reached the office he would have sufficient matter on his book to fill a page. The consequence would be, very likely, that the chief, impatient with his stupidity, and knowing how long it would take him to write a column from his over-burdened book, would testily tell him to boil it down to half the space originally stipulated. And thus, to write his half-column, the unfortunate youth would have to wade through page after page of notes to pick out the important points of each speaker, and all the time he was doing this he would have the chief fretting and mentally vowing never again to trust him with such an appointment.

It will be seen, therefore, that it is to the reporter's own advantage to learn to write up his meetings as they go on. On a weekly paper it is, perhaps, not so important. The reporter may plead that he will have next day in which to transcribe his notes. But in the reporting world we can never guarantee days beforehand in this manner. New appointments are always cropping up, and the junior who wishes to enjoy the favour of his chief will find it greatly to his advantage to come down to the office in a morning with a clean book and a sheaf of copy in his pocket, ready to put his hand to anything that may have turned up since he left the office the preceding night.

In writing up at meetings there is one thing to be watched—and that is not to be so wrapped up in your longhand matter as to pay no heed to what is going on around you. An ear should always be open to the speaking, and the moment a speaker commences to deliver himself of anything of moment the note-book should be resorted to and the utterances recorded. This will require a little practice. It may be rather hard at first to learn to do two things at once, but after the habit is acquired thoroughly it will repay the reporter a hundred-fold, in shorter hours of work and greater ease in turning out his copy. A man who follows this practice will never be called a “slogger,” which is the derisive designation applied to reporters who are mere shorthand machines—who write down in shorthand nearly everything that is said and then religiously transcribe it, only to have it remorselessly cut down by an impatient chief or sub-editor. These reporters give themselves an endless amount of unnecessary labour, and are the cause of a good deal of worry and anxiety to those responsible for their work—those who have to fit it in the amount of space commensurate with its importance. And, furthermore, they are their own obstacles to promotion, as a reporter with the reputation of a “slogger” will find no place in the best newspaper offices. They find their level on country weeklies or jog out a machine-like existence as district men.

I think I hardly need go into details as to the various kinds of meetings which are reported by the Press. They are of all sorts and characters, though all are

reported in the same way. I will just mention that particular care should be exercised when reporting meetings of public companies. At such meetings figures and technical terms abound, and as, in addition, there are frequently "rows" and "scenes" not mentioned on the agenda paper, it is well that the reporter should keep a clear head, and verify every statement about which he has feelings of doubt. Be very particular about names, too. This is very difficult at a meeting where most of those present are strangers; and if the names of all the speakers cannot be ascertained, it is better to speak of them as "shareholders" rather than run the risk of ascribing statements to individuals who may next day have to deny uttering them.

Libellous statements are often common enough at company meetings. My advice on this head is, avoid them as you would the plague. It is a popular belief among the public, and among some journalists, too, that a libellous statement in a speech is privileged if the speech is an accurate report of part of a public meeting, published without malice. Those who hold this idea seem to think that because it is published on the authority of the speaker, the responsibility for the libel is transferred from the shoulders of the editor to those of the person who made the speech containing the libellous statement. This is not so, as the following letter will show. A point of this character recently occurred in my own experience. I was perfectly certain in my own mind that the law was against an editor publishing a libel on the authority even of a public

man at a public meeting, but I had no written or printed proofs at hand to substantiate my position. I therefore wrote to Mr. Cornish, secretary of the Institute of Journalists, whose letter of reply contained the following paragraph :—

“As the law of libel stands, it is one of its anomalies, often resulting in great practical injustice, that the journal publishing a speech embodying a libellous statement, is itself legally responsible for damage caused by the publication. Attempts to induce Parliament to at least join the speaker in this responsibility have hitherto failed.”

This should be conclusive enough. What the reporter has to remember is that a libel is anything which is calculated to injure a man in his business or social relations, to bring him into contempt, or to prejudice him in the eyes of the world. The publication of anything which comes under these heads can only be excused on the ground that it is a matter of public concern, and that such publication is for the public good. As this can rarely be successfully pleaded (we are not all Laboucheres), it is far better to err on the right side—to cut out everything libellous, and “if in doubt leave out.”

Speeches are either reported in the first or third person. If in the first person, they are written out in the same style as they are delivered—word for word, nothing being omitted. If in the third person it is not absolutely necessary that every word uttered by the speaker should be written out in the report. If a full report is wanted, and the speaker is one

who turns out good sentences, with nothing superfluous, his speech may be given fully, only putting it in the third person instead of the first. This is what I mean. Suppose the speaker makes the following remarks, and they are taken down *verbatim* by the reporter :

“I am very pleased to be here on such an auspicious occasion. The meeting is one I have looked forward to with considerable interest for some weeks back, and my pleasure at being here is only equalled by the gratification that so many of you have done me the honour of favouring me with your presence and support.”

Rendered into the third person style, it might be written out something like this:

“He was very pleased to be present on such an auspicious occasion. He had looked forward to the meeting with considerable interest, and his pleasure in attending was only equalled by his satisfaction at the honour done him by so many favouring him with their presence and support.”

This is a rough and ready illustration, but it will serve to show what is meant by a third person report. The great point is to give the ideas of the speaker, and to adhere to his language as much as possible, though in condensing it is allowable to put the speaker's thoughts in language which may not be altogether his. If a two stick summary of a column speech is required it will be readily seen that absolute adherence to the speaker's language is impossible; but in introducing sentences of his own the reporter should take care to see that he attributes nothing to the speaker

which is likely to be in conflict with the language used by him throughout his address. He must do him justice.

Bad speeches must be made to read well. Errors of grammar must be rectified, and slovenliness of style should be improved upon. The responsibility for a grammatical rendering of the speech will rest with the reporter, and not with the speaker; though if any glaring error of grammar is committed by the speaker, and the reporter is anxious to introduce it in his report as said, he may, by the use of quotation marks, show that the responsibility for such error is thrown upon the shoulders of the person reported. But this should never be done for motives of malice, as I have seen it done by reporters who have purposely made speakers cut a very foolish appearance in print merely by reporting them literally.

CHAPTER VII.

SPORT AND DESCRIPTIVE WORK.

THE sporting "column" (sometimes extended to a page) is now a recognised feature of the modern newspaper, either weekly or daily. The last few years have seen immense strides made in this department of reporting, which is now, to all intents and purposes, a profession to itself. The large dailies employ special sporting staffs, under chiefs of their own, all the sporting appointments being taken over by this department. Football and cricket, or as perhaps some would prefer it, cricket and football, provide the greater amount of the work done by the members of the sporting staffs, but in addition there are such other engagements as athletic meetings, cycle races, and even pigeon-shooting and rabbit-coursing, to be covered. On a daily paper the ordinary reporting staff will have little to do with these matters. On special occasions, say the final great match for the cricket championship or the football "cup," a reporter may be told off to do a "special" on the match. But even in this case a knowledge of the details of the game is by no means absolutely necessary, as the report is only intended to

supplement that of the sporting reporter, and will generally be found to run more on the lines of a humorous description of the field, in which the leading characteristics both of players and spectators are touched off, than of an analytical dissertation on the game.

It does not therefore follow that the junior reporter on a daily paper should be an expert in sport in order to carry him through his work. But, as in many other things, the case is quite different on a weekly. Here, as has already been pointed out, the reporting staffs are only small, and they have to take everything which comes in their way. In some instances, of course, there are reporters who have inclinations towards sport, and when this is so it may be taken for granted that their knowledge will be utilized to the full, and they will find themselves marked for every engagement in which their special aptitude will be of service to the paper they represent. In a few instances, where the proprietors care to go to the expense, sporting fixtures are looked after by outsiders, and it may happen that in some cases it is a compositor who increases his income by devoting his Saturday afternoons to work of this character. But as a general rule newspaper proprietors are reluctant to pay outsiders to do work which they think should be performed by their own staffs, and it is because of this that the reporters of the great majority of weekly newspapers have the sporting appointments of their town or district to cover.

Every junior reporter, and intending junior, should therefore, if his lot be cast as a member of the staff of

a weekly paper, make it his business to acquire a knowledge of the leading points of such games as cricket and football, at the very least. This is not a difficult matter, and it is perhaps not too much to say that those who are not in possession of this knowledge form a very small proportion indeed of the youth of Britain. Nowadays nearly everybody is more or less in touch with either one or the other of these popular forms of sport, and in view of the enormous amount of newspaper space devoted to them daily it is the easiest thing in the world to keep in sympathy with them, and to be continually well informed upon all that is going on.

On the average weekly paper there will be little else in the sporting line but cricket and football. All local matches will be reported fully; district matches will be supplied by correspondents or clipped from other papers; and any general items of special importance will also be "transferred" from other columns by means of scissors and paste, the whole making up the week's sporting news. Then, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases there will be the inevitable "notes," these being written by the reporter who makes this department a special feature of his work. This represents really the whole of the sporting work required from the reporting staff, and every junior reporter ought to feel that if called upon he would be equal to the proper performance of these duties.

It would be a waste of time and space to attempt to lay down a code of instructions as to how to

report either football or cricket matches. Granted that the reporter understands the game, approaches it with an open mind and can write decent English—granted these things and the rest is quite easy. There should be no favouritism or partiality displayed, and if the game or the players have not the reporter's sympathy, his own feelings should be entirely put out of sight. In the report opinions should not be introduced. This is a matter upon which there is room for two opinions, but it is now pretty generally held that in reporting appointments of this nature a word-picture of what took place should be given without the introduction of any expressions of opinion at all. The "Notes" column is the place in which the reporter should set out his opinions, make his suggestions, and offer his advice. Opinions differ upon this point, it is true, but in many newspaper offices it is now the rule, rather than the exception, to eliminate all expressions of opinion from reports of the class now referred to.

Extravagant language should be avoided. The sporting reporters of these latter days have invented a jargon of their own which is an abomination to those who have to confess to a weakness for "the well of English undefiled." Why the ordinary resources of the English tongue should be inadequate for the purposes of a football or cricket report it is hard to say; but the fact remains that a cheap and high falutin' style has been introduced into sporting journalism which is positively hateful to the cultured reader. The ordinary sporting reporter

speaks familiarly of the sun as "Old Sol," or magniloquently describes it as "the glorious orb of day;" if the day be cloudy and wet he will tell us that "Jupiter Pluvius dominated the heavens;" whilst what an ordinary man would speak of as the weather is by him metamorphosed into the "meteorological and atmospheric conditions," and so on. In describing the game, all manner of atrocities are perpetrated. For instance, a kick which failed to secure a goal, as intended, was written up by one of these scribes as a "well-directed blow, which was unfortunately void of fruition." The men who write this kind of stuff are unfortunately void of common sense. Football reporting should not necessarily indicate a departure from sanity. The public do not care, at least the sporting public, for anything but plain, literary English, and it is not incumbent upon any writer to make himself look foolish by attempting to improve that which was good enough to enshrine the thoughts of those masters of the pen who have built up our English literature. It is an error common to most young reporters to think that they can write better English than anybody else, and in the case of many sporting reporters, the error is in evidence daily, and in all they write.

Be sparing of the lash—in other words be not too critical. How easy it is to find fault and to show one's ignorance in the belief all the time that it is pure criticism! What a pitfall this is to the young reporter! What need there is for the blue pencil of a judicious

chief when looking over a youngster's efforts in the thorny path of criticism! An impartial critic may be said to be born rather than made, and, if made, he is the product of a lifetime spent in acquiring and assimilating knowledge, in storing up information gathered from contact with other minds. All criticism, it has been said, is comparative, and it is because of this that so much of the so-called criticism is not criticism at all. If a man has only seen one football match, and knows absolutely nothing of the play, he cannot say that it is either a good or a bad game—nor could he, if he were to say either, prove it. It is according to the extent of a man's knowledge of the game, to the number of matches he has seen, that he is enabled to compare and criticise, to set up a standard of excellence by which he judges all other games.

This truth is applicable to all other forms of criticism, and should be borne in mind in view of what will be written later, on the general subject of criticism. Here I wish simply to warn the reporter who has to write comments upon various games not to attempt too much in the way of criticism until he thoroughly feels his feet.

Write your notes in a pleasant and chatty manner. Point out defects, but do it kindly, and if vigorous language is needed the dictionary will be found to contain an abundance of words which may be used without fear of rendering the criticism more distasteful than is necessary. Adverse criticism is nearly always unpalatable to the person or persons criticised, but there are ways of doing it, when needful, in a gentle-

manly manner, such as will cause it to contain no sting nor leave behind it no bitter reflections. In dealing with individual players, temper justice with mercy, and be careful not to say anything which will expose them to the laughter or contempt of those amongst whom they move.

I shall not say anything as to the technical side of reporting sporting events. Every follower of sport is conversant with the words and phrases used in sporting, and they should be familiar to every reporter. Nearly all newspapers have their own way of dealing with sporting matters, and the various styles in vogue cannot well be taught or even described in a book. A few minutes' conversation with the chief, or a glance at the files of the paper, will be the best method of imparting to a new member of any staff all necessary information as to the style affected by that particular print.

From sporting matters we may turn to what is termed descriptive work. By this is meant, as the phrase suggests, the writing of articles in which events are described rather than reported. Descriptive writers have now a very wide field open to them, both in the higher and lower walks of journalism. Parliament is as much described as reported. In the earlier days of Parliamentary reporting the proceedings were necessarily described, the absence of verbatim shorthand preventing the writers of those days from reporting the debates as we do now. The introduction of shorthand was the death-knell of the old system, and in its place we soon had the verbatim reports

of the accomplished shorthand writers, who elbowed the old-fashioned reporters out of the Houses of Parliament. But during late years the descriptive writers have come to the front, and have taken a position in the very first ranks of journalism. Side by side with the reports of the speeches delivered in Parliament we have now the special article of the descriptive writer, who gives us a word picture of the incidents of the day's sitting as a sort of companion to the ordinary report. This descriptive writing has invaded the Law Courts, too, and descriptive sketches of great trials are nowadays wired round the country in addition to the usual report of the shorthand writer, and are usually much more interesting and readable. I heard an editor remark some time ago that the day of the mere shorthand writer had gone by. And in a large measure this is so. In the hurry and rush of life people have no longer the time to read the long and prosy reports which were formerly the rule when shorthand was in its infancy and newspaper proprietors were anxious to make every use of this new servant. The world moves too fast for us nowadays to spare the time to read these long-winded productions. For the purposes of ordinary reporting the "verbatim" of a few years ago are being rapidly shelved, and in their places we have the "summary," or the bright and telling descriptive "special."

The art of writing a good descriptive article cannot be taught through a book, or any number of books. The reason for this is obvious. The work of a descrip-

tive writer is so varied and multifarious, and embraces so many different subjects, that what might be said of one appointment would be altogether meaningless when applied to another. Hardly a subject can be mentioned which has not at one time or another provided material for a descriptive sketch. One day the reporter may be marked to do a "special" on the opening of a new railway line, or a trial trip over some portion of it. Another day he may be sent out to work up an article on the prevalence of some epidemic in the town; whilst on another occasion it may be that he will be sent to describe the proceedings of an important congress or conference in some distant town, the appointment keeping him away from his office for perhaps the greater part of a week. Shows of every character, descriptions of new inventions and experiments, great religious or state ceremonies, fires, political tours, and engagements far too numerous to be easily specified, will provide material for the pencil of the descriptive writer. Naturally, to a reporter gifted with the ability to write fresh original matter, these appointments are very pleasant ones, and are a welcome relief from the wearying round of alternate note-taking and transcribing. But to a reporter who is not so gifted they will afford feelings of anything but pleasure. The appointment may be a pleasant one, but during the time he is occupied with it, and whilst going to it and returning to the office, he will be full of anxious dread as to how he is going to turn it out, and what sort of an effort he is going to make of it.

As I said earlier, it is obviously impossible to lay down a hard and fast code of rules for descriptive writing. Such a code would be as fatal to the success of such an article as it would be to the peace of mind of the reporter. For the observance of anything like cast-iron regulations would destroy the very charm of these specimens of the highest branch of the reporter's art—their originality, their freshness and lightness of touch. One of the great points to be observed is the attempt to be original, or, at all events, not to slavishly copy the efforts of other people in similar directions. I have read articles on historical subjects under the heading "Special," which have been mere reprints of facts from guide-books, directories, histories, or encyclopedias, with the language occasionally altered for decency's sake; or "descriptive" articles dealing with important ceremonial events which have been but a string of "thens," each part of the ceremony being introduced by a "then," and being dismissed with a few common-place sentences in which the proceedings were simply mentioned as having taken place, with no attempt to describe them. This is not descriptive writing, and yet it unfortunately passes muster for it among reporters who lack ability and knowledge.

A descriptive article should be written with thought and care. On seating himself at his desk the reporter should carefully think over the facts he is going to write about, marshall them before his mind's eye, and mentally decide upon the order in which he shall reproduce them. This is of great importance, as without

such a precaution there is danger of the facts being written in loose order, simply committed to the paper as they surge through the brain, this frequently necessitating later revision, and sometimes compelling portions of the article to be re-written. Then, having got the facts well in hand, a start should be made. A good opening sentence is a necessity. I have seen men sit half an hour pondering over a good beginning, and throwing away sheet after sheet containing initial sentences which did not come up to their standard of what was required. A better plan than this, I think, if a suitable idea for an opening does not suggest itself, is to go straight on to the end, when the first few pages may be re-written and improved upon in the added light of what comes after them. Following the opening the facts upon which the article is founded should be given in their proper order, until the end is reached. Throughout the article the style should be uniform, and the language should be specially selected for the occasion, with due regard to the requirements of the article, as suggested by its nature and the method of treatment adopted. Thus, a flippant style would be out of place in an article dealing with an important religious ceremony; whilst a pedantic or academic tone would be equally obnoxious in an article, say, on some phase or other of social life. The principal aim of the writer should be to present his article in a readable and interesting form, with light, easy, and graceful language, enlivened with illustrations drawn from his reading or personal knowledge, and with the introduction of an occasional quotation

or two to point an argument or enforce a fact. A good deal of help will be derived from "reading up" the subject to be written about, and from a careful perusal of the best descriptive articles which appear in the London and provincial dailies.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHOWS AND EXHIBITIONS.

I THINK I have already said somewhere that one of the chief charms of the reporter's life is found in the variety and ever-changing character of the work he is called upon to perform. The reporter nowadays must turn his pen to anything and everything. He must be ready, and able, to turn from the narrative of some local squabble, as unfolded at the police court, to a critical description of a collection of paintings or specimens of the sculptor's art, and must be equally ready and able to write more or less learnedly on the points of a prize bull or the merits of a mammoth wurtzel; while he will also, at other times, be called upon to write about the drama, to interest his readers in an industrial exhibition, a flower show, or a collection of curios from lands he has never seen and rarely heard about. The smart reporter is able to do all these things, and to do them well, whereas the reporter who is not smart will turn out a lot of dry uninteresting details, which very few people care about, and will clothe them, moreover, in loose, ill-fitting and jerky language, which will betray in every line his unfitness for such high-class form of work.

To do these things well should be the ambition of every young reporter. At first sight they may appear very difficult subjects to tackle, but when boldly approached they will be seen to be not half so difficult as appearances led the junior to suppose. The first essentials, after the ability to write with ease and fluency, are self-assurance and tact, and, fortified with these, the reporter, however inexperienced, need have little fear of failure in this or any other department of his work.

Take an agricultural show. Now, it is a common impression that to do an agricultural show well the reporter needs to be a judge of cattle, and requires the history and technicalities of agriculture at his fingers' ends. As a matter of fact, this is by no means the case, and if it were it would be a hard look out for most editors of newspapers—they would be compelled to have their shows done for them by experts, as there are very few journalists, even the best of all round men, who possess the amount of knowledge of these matters thought by many outsiders to be absolutely requisite. A smattering of every department of knowledge is invaluable, and, indeed, indispensable to every reporter who would succeed in his profession. He cannot know too much. "A little learning" may be a "dangerous thing" to some people, if wrongly applied, but in the case of the journalist "a little learning" on every subject under the sun would be found to be much more helpful than if he were crammed to the roots of his hair with information upon only a few topics. The more a man knows upon every subject

the better for him, undoubtedly ; but the point I wish to make clear here is that the successful journalist will be found to be the one who is not absolutely ignorant upon any one subject, rather than the one who is thoroughly accomplished in one or two departments and grievously ignorant of everything outside them. A reporter should know a little of everything—a great deal of history and literature, as much as he can acquire of art, music, and the drama ; and should also be well-informed on all ordinary subjects of the day, as politics, trade and commerce, &c.

But to go back to agricultural shows. A reporter's qualifications to do these appointments should include, I should say, in addition to his ordinary reportorial acquirements, a knowledge of the technical terms used by agriculturists in speaking of their business ; of the seasons and their products, and of the main points which distinguish, to the agricultural eye, good stock from bad. In addition the reporter should have in his head, ready to be drawn upon if required, a little history of agriculture and the fate of the chief crops during the past few years ; while the more he knows of land values and land questions generally, and the greater his local knowledge, the better.

It may be urged that this is not much of an equipment. True, but it is as much as the average well-informed man requires to carry him through the world safely, without making a fool of himself in the presence of men who know more about this particular subject than he does. If the reporter has any special knowledge on agriculture he will find it come in very useful, but if

he has no more than what I have sketched above he will find it sufficient to enable him to turn out his copy with credit to himself and satisfaction to his readers.

The first time the novice finds his way into the grounds of a large agricultural show he will, if unaccompanied by an experienced reporter, feel very much at sea—the cackling of fowls, the barking of dogs, the bellowing of cattle, the neighing of horses and bleating of sheep, and the air of confusion which seems to prevail, making him feel almost as though he were lost, and being nearly sufficient to induce him, unless he possesses initiative and resource, to turn his back upon the scene and make his way back to his office without delay. But this, of course, would be fatal to his prospect of ever reporting a second show, and it is to be supposed that no matter how puzzled he was he would stay and brave it out.

My first impression of an agricultural show was certainly not an assuring one. I had had no one to give me a word of advice or instruction how to go on, and I remember it was with a feeling somewhat akin to fear and trembling that I made my way into the show ground. At first I was simply bewildered. All the tents containing exhibits were full of sightseers, while the cattle and sheep pens in the open were almost hid from view by crowds of gaitered, red-faced Derbyshire farmers. With difficulty I made my way through one such crowd and found myself, with others, staring at a prize bull. But the card which announced that fact contained no mention of the name of the owner, nor did

it refer to the animal's antecedents and past successes in the show field, and I was not so ignorant but that I knew these were points which I ought to bring into prominence.

There was nothing to be gained by a prolonged contemplation of the creature, and I therefore gave up my position in front, and walked down towards the quieter part of the ground in a state bordering upon mental despair, when I came across a canvas erection bearing over the entrance the welcome legend, "Secretary's Tent." I entered, and from that moment my doubts and difficulties were at rest. In the first place, the secretary gave me a schedule showing the various departments and classes of the exhibition; and, in the second place, he gave me a lot of figures showing the entries in each class and in the whole show, with a comparison between them and the numbers for the previous half-dozen shows. Then he accounted for the differences, explaining, for instance, that the falling-off in the number of pigs entered was due to the prevalence of swine fever in the adjoining county of Yorkshire, which had prevented pigs being removed out of the district; the increase in grown agricultural products he explained by stating that the season had been a better one than they had experienced for some years past. And thus he went on, telling me, among many other things, that the increase in the number of exhibits of dairy produce was due to the County Council having offered prizes, with a view to stimulate that industry to fresh activity; in this way imparting to me a good deal

of useful information of a character I knew would be exactly suitable for my introduction. Before leaving him he marked my schedule with the name of every prize winner, and then, taking me out into the grounds, he introduced me in turn to one of the judges of each section of the show, who gave me their impressions of the departments they had been judging. After this I devoted an hour to walking round the show by myself, carefully observing all there was to be seen, and verifying, as far as I could, the information given me by the judges. On returning to the office, I was in a position to write a column and a half of description, and I have every reason to believe that my report of the show gave complete satisfaction to all concerned; certainly, my chief was satisfied with it.

Of course, I do not lay this down as the only or best way to do a show. The varying circumstances of each show would render such a proceeding as mine impossible in all cases; what I do suggest is that the inexperienced reporter, on going to his first show, might safely use my method of procedure as a basis upon which to work. With the widened experience that will come after reporting this class of appointment for a number of years, the journalist who uses his faculties of observation and his memory will be able to do them with much less outside aid than I was at first glad to secure; but, as I put it earlier, it will pay the novice to adopt a principle something akin to mine. Certainly, the secretary of a show should always be interviewed, no matter how competent the

reporter feels, as it is usually from the secretary that the prize list is obtained, to say nothing of the special information of the character described earlier, which could not well be picked up from any other source.

Then, as to the judges, there is never anything lost by having a few minutes' chat with them. If much of their conversation cannot be utilised, there is generally something in it which is either worth being used in itself, or will serve as suggestions for likely matter to be written in. Then, further, there is the reporter's own faculty of observation, which should be very much in use on an occasion of this sort. A walk round the show yard, and a careful inspection of the exhibits, will suggest to the thoughtful reporter an abundance of topics, either to be simply referred to or elaborated at length, according to their importance and the amount of space at disposal.

Avoid too much criticism, and be careful not to introduce too many of your own opinions and reflections into the report. There is not much need for criticism, after all, in the majority of cases, and much which the junior reporter is tempted to indulge in is nothing better than fault-finding, and not criticism at all. A case in point occurs to me as I write. A reporter who had once been doing a big show in a country district told me how fearfully he had "slated" it. I turned up the report in the paper, and discovered that the alleged criticism was simply a splenetic and rather vulgar growl at the show, because, forsooth, the arrangements for the Press had not been made with a due regard for the comfort and convenience of the reporters

present. There are occasions, more particularly in the case of public officials, when it is almost necessary, in the interests of Press and public alike, that churlish officials should be castigated in the columns of the Press, but this should never be done for the mere purpose of gratifying private spleen because of some fancied discourtesy towards a reporter. In the case I am now referring to there was absolutely no justification for the insult to the secretary, who, at most, had been worried by his duties and the numerous calls upon him and had handed over the reporters to a subordinate official, instructing him to do his best for them. The "dignity of the Press," a phrase about which we hear a good deal in these days of the Institute of Journalists, should be upheld and maintained as much as possible, but the way to do this is not by rancorously railing in newspaper reports at every individual who chances to offend a reporter. These are not matters of public concern, and it is only in the very gravest cases that a public reprimand is justifiable. There is always a danger, where the copy of young writers is not properly supervised and trimmed, that they will do this sort of thing to show how they can "slate" offending persons and objects.

In writing out a report it is well to open with a few bright introductory sentences, and the more original they are the better, provided they are not extravagantly original. Following this may come a few facts relating to the circumstances under which the show is held—the state of the weather, with a reference to that of previous years; the numerical strength of the entries,

the amount of prize money, &c.; and then a few sentences in which the show is reviewed as a whole. After this will come the details of each section of the show. On some weeklies a big county show would have devoted to it a whole page of original matter, each department being set out and reviewed completely; while on others a column of original writing would be deemed sufficient. In the case of the long report each section would have a separate headline, as "Horses," "Cattle," "Pigs," &c., and under each headline would be treated in detail nearly every prize winner. In the shorter report a small paragraph for each section would be accounted enough. In dealing with each department careful writing is required. Some reports read more like auctioneers' catalogues than anything else, for the simple reason that the reporter has taken each prize winner in turn, and showered upon it all the complimentary adjectives his vocabulary recognises. Aim a bit higher than this. Try to be original, if only in a slight degree; endeavour either to say something new, or to dress old facts in a new and attractive garb. But take care that the attempt to be original does not lead you astray, by causing you to indulge in a lot of silly and extravagant writing, which will only be laughed at by shrewd people. It is better to walk safely along the old beaten path than to leave it and fall of a heap. Endeavour to acquire a good style, but never let it afford ground for the suspicion that it is forced and artificial. A very profitable occupation, and one which should be followed by all juniors, is that of reading reports in the large dailies. In these organs

you will come across bright, smartly written descriptions, containing a wealth of English, and marked by such a keen analytical appreciation of the exhibits as to make them pleasant and agreeable reading. In a word, the dry bones of a treatise so practical that it might have been written by a specialist have been clothed in so attractive a garb as to become interesting and readable even to those who know and care very little of the subject. This should be the aim of every reporter, and the only way to attain it is by careful thought and study, by taking the best work as his model, and by a determined effort to lift himself above the level of the commonplace writers, who, even yet, crowd the minor papers in the provinces.

After the report of the show, the prize list is generally given in full. The secretary of the show will generally mark a schedule; but, if possible, two should be obtained and marked on alternate pages, so that the compositors will not have to set from both sides of the copy. It is much more satisfactory to write out the prize list. If the reporters are willing to work together, this is not such a long task. A "black" is inserted between the slips of copy paper, so that a duplicate impression is taken, and by taking it in turns at dictating and writing, a long prize list is soon got through.

From agricultural we may turn to flower shows, but really there is little need to say anything about them, as the method of reporting does not vary at all. They are less important than agricultural shows, and less space is taken up with them, but beyond that there is

no difference in the style of reporting. What I have written is, therefore, applicable to them.

Art and industrial exhibitions, and picture collections, occasionally come in the way of the junior on a weekly, or daily, but it may be assumed that they will not be of any great importance. In the case of pictures, new productions of worth are rarely shown first in the provinces, and the really valuable pictures that are occasionally sent round the country on tour are generally well enough known, and have been described often enough to render fresh descriptions unnecessary. Further than that, if anything of importance ever did arise in these departments, it is hardly conceivable that a junior would be instructed to deal with it unless he had special knowledge which fitted him for the task. The same with musical appointments, and the same also with regard to dramatic productions at the local theatres. In all these cases reporters with knowledge and experience are sent, and before a junior is marked for them he will have to show that he is capable of doing something creditable with them. As I said before, a reporter should know something about such subjects as art, music, and the drama, and it will repay young and aspiring journalists to become possessed of such books as will give them an insight into these matters and enable them to become informed upon all the main points connected with them. It is not necessary that a man should be able to paint in order that he may be qualified to describe or criticise a picture ; should be an accomplished musician

before attempting to report a concert or musical festival; or should be able to write a play or take the part of Hamlet before doing a local par of a theatrical representation. But it is necessary that he should know something about these departments of knowledge before attempting to criticise anything relating to them. It is because of the ignorance of so many reporters on these important subjects that so much trash finds its way into the columns of many of our newspapers. The reporter should educate himself in these branches of his work, and should never allow himself to write a single sentence concerning a picture or a play which would be likely to reveal his ignorance. If he knows very little about the matter he has in hand, his intelligence will tell him that a few general remarks will be better than an attempted description or criticism which will only lay bare his unfitness for the task, and make him and his paper foolish in the eyes of intelligent people. First aim at descriptions rather than criticisms, and it will be found that very soon the critical faculty, if existent, will come to the front of its own accord, and will enable the young reporter, out of the stores of his knowledge, to compare one subject with another and so work in a little comparative criticism in his descriptive article; and by following this up, and seeking ever to acquire more information and knowledge, he may hope one day to take his stand on a level with the other members of the staff, and to do the most difficult appointments which figure on the reporters' diary.

CHAPTER IX.

CALLS—BRIBERY—CORPS WORK—LINEAGE— PROFESSIONAL RIVALRY.

IN this chapter attention will be directed to a few subjects hardly of sufficient importance to be worth a chapter each, and yet much too important to be passed over.

1. CALLS.

In all newspaper offices a more or less extensive system of calls is practised, and by means of these calls many a paragraph is picked up which otherwise would in all likelihood be missed. It does not follow because there appears a paragraph announcing a small fire at a dwelling-house, at which the damage was very small, that a reporter was present and chronicled the event as he witnessed it, nor does it follow because Mr. Smith, a townsman, fell in the street and broke his leg, and the information was conveyed to the public through a newspaper paragraph, that one of the spectators of the accident was a reporter. As a matter of fact half of these paragraphs are obtained as the result of making a series of calls at the police and fire offices, infirmaries and hospitals, and so on. These calls will come in the

junior's list of duties, and it is because they are important and require doing thoroughly that I mention them here. On a daily paper the calls are very numerous, and are made daily, with special inquiries weekly. The police station is the place most frequently visited. The junior on a daily will make a call on the police as soon as he comes on duty in the morning, and from that time until midnight, or even later, the staff will be in constant touch with the officials at the station. From the police pars are obtained on all sorts of subjects—suicides, arrests, accidents, burglaries, &c. As a general rule the Press and the police work together very well, in some towns more so than others, perhaps. I know one town where the reporters are admitted to the central police station at any hour of the day or night, and the book in which are entered the various reports brought in from the streets by the constables is open to them to take from it what they want, without let or hindrance. The police, of course, have confidence in them, and know that nothing will be copied from the book that ought not to be, and that proper use will be made of the information thus obtained. This is very pleasant and agreeable, and considerably lightens the work of the reporters, who show their gratitude by rendering the police all the help they can, in the way of publishing matter which will be of service to them. In many towns the relationship between Press and police is not so very friendly. Reporters are held at arm's length, and information is very grudgingly given them by the police authorities, who, however, are always pleasant enough to the reporters when it is in the power of the

latter to do them a service. The cultivation of a friendly feeling between the reporters and the police is at all times desirable. Nothing is lost on either side by a cordial relationship, and, indeed, it will often be found to the advantage of the police to have the ear of the reporters, as the newspapers are frequently, by reason of the publicity they give to the information contained in them, of real service in furthering the ends of justice. Other calls which may be mentioned are those at the town hall, or town clerk's office, where information relative to the doings of the corporation is supplied to the Press; the hospitals and infirmaries, for accidents and deaths; the mortuary, and so on, each town having its own special institutions and each paper its own list of calls. There is very little more to be said about these calls, except that it behoves the reporter to be very careful about publishing the information he thus obtains. Much of it, particularly that from the police, will require careful watching, so that nothing libellous or dangerous creeps into the paper. A prominent citizen is arrested, for instance, on a certain grave charge, and the police communicate the information to the reporters, who forthwith publish it. This is vastly different from merely reporting the proceedings when the individual is before the court, when all that is said is privileged. In the case of the par announcing the arrest the prisoner should be written of on the assumption that he is innocent, and if the offence with which he is charged is mentioned it should be done in a very guarded way, not omitting to use the word "alleged" in conjunction with the offence upon which the charge is founded. By

being careful in these matters many a dangerous slip will be avoided. What I have said will perhaps be sufficient to show the reporter the great need there is for making these calls carefully, and for the use of caution in giving publicity to the information obtained from them.

2. BRIBING THE PRESS.

A reporter should, like a certain personage oft quoted, be "above suspicion." There is a very popular notion on the part of some ignorant people that the Press is open to bribery and corruption. Indeed, this belief has been voiced by people who ought to know better, as witness the recent libels on the profession by one of the leading writers for the stage—libels which were brought before the notice of the Institute of Journalists, and created much soreness in Press circles. One of the factors which has had so much to do with placing the British Press in its present proud position is undoubtedly its freedom and independence. Once let newspaper men relinquish this freedom and independence, and the moral tone and influence of the Press will suffer in consequence. The Press is *not* to be bought, and the endeavour to do this generally recoils on the head of the misguided individual who is so strangely lacking in common-sense and prudence as to attempt it. In former days heavy bribes were undoubtedly taken by owners, editors, and reporters, in return for which their praise or condemnation (at the option of the purchaser) was at the service of the corrupter. But those days have gone by, and the only approach to bribery known to journalism in these days

is the "puff" paragraph printed in impoverished journals in return for low-priced advertisements. And even these are rare, and though bad enough, whatever the motive, they are more often due to the inability of editors to make both ends meet without falling back upon such resources, than to a desire to use their columns for fraudulent purposes. Attempts to bribe reporters are nowadays very rare. It sometimes happens that, in police cases, defendants with money and position will so far forget themselves as to ask the reporters, for a consideration, not to report the cases in which they are concerned. There should only be one answer to this or any similar request—an indignant refusal to be bought. Some reporters are so sore at being approached in this manner that they will publish the case in an extended form, even if they had previously made up their minds to leave it alone. Such a proceeding, though it may be rather cruel, usually has the effect desired—that of teaching the would-be purchaser of the favour of the reporters that it is a commodity not to be bought in such a fashion. Let the reporter make up his mind at the outset of his career that he will never accept a bribe, and he will find, time after time, occasion to congratulate himself if he only lives up to his decision. The temptation to accept a bribe may be great, and the immediate gain may be large, but if the temptation is not resisted the reporter will lose his peace of mind, and will ever be dreading the exposure which, if made, would ruin his prospects irretrievably. Not only with money, but in other ways are reporters sought to be influenced in certain direc-

tions. Neither for the sake of losing a friend nor making an enemy should a reporter be induced to write anything which is not strictly honest or impartial. If he does, he will open up to himself a walk full of pitfalls, and sooner or later he will fall and make a wreck of his hopes and ambitions.

3. REPORTING IN RINGS.

In the chapter on reporting public meetings I said nothing about reporting in rings, because it very rarely occurs that a junior is requested to join a ring, and take a turn at a verbatim report of a speech. I have since thought, however, that it would be as well to mention it, because in the case of juniors on weekly papers it may happen—perhaps only once in a lifetime—that an important political speech is made in the town in which they reside, and the reporters from a distance—from daily papers and Press agencies—may combine in a ring and ask one or two of the local reporters to join them. This would be an opportunity not to be missed, and if the local men were forced to decline, through inefficiency or lack of knowledge, they would feel very small indeed. A ring is formed for the purpose of producing a verbatim report in the quickest possible time. As all reporters know, the labour of turning out a long report of a speech consists not so much in taking a shorthand note of the speech as in transcribing it afterwards. An expert shorthand writer might easily take a full note of a speech lasting three-quarters of an hour, but if he had to write it all out it would take him three or four hours to do it. In the case of an important speech, delivered,

say, at nine o'clock at night, to be afterwards written out verbatim and wired all over the country for next morning's papers, it is obvious that one man would be unequal to the task. Therefore, for the purpose of getting the speech out of hand expeditiously, rings are formed. A ring should consist of six, seven, or eight expert shorthand writers. More than seven or eight would make it cumbersome and unwieldy, and less than six would render it difficult for the members of the ring to keep on a level with the speaker. Suppose we have a ring of seven, with two extra men; one to time and another to sort the "flimsies." When the speaker commences the first man begins with him, and takes notes for about two minutes. At the end of that time the one who is timing the ring makes a signal for him to cease note-taking, and for the second man to commence exactly where he leaves off. The first man will then write out his matter, having plenty of time to do this before the other six reporters have taken their two-minute turns, when it will be time for him to take a turn again. Thus, all the seven reporters take turns, and all write out their copy in the interval between one turn and another. As for the copy it is passed down to the sorter, who unpins the flimsies and places them in little heaps, one for each paper represented in the ring. It will be seen from this that ring work is not hard. Under ordinary circumstances a reporter would only have two or three turns, and as he would have his copy written out soon after, he would be free by the time the meeting was over. The great essentials are an accurate note, speed in writing up so as to be ready for the next

turn, and careful timing, so that all the takes are of even length. A ring is a great saving of labour, as it means that a speech, no matter how long, may be written out fully and finished in less than a quarter of an hour after the speaker resumes his seat, while if necessary the report may be sent to the telegraph office in batches of half-a-dozen slips as the speech proceeds, with the result that the matter will have sped over the wires, and be in the hands of the compositors in a dozen newspaper offices, even while the orator is on his feet.

4. CORRESPONDING FOR OTHER PAPERS.

The old days when reporters used to make small fortunes by lining for other papers than their own are now gone. The press agencies, such as the Press Association and the Central News, have taken a good deal of this work out of the hands of local reporters. I know one man who, on the occasion of an important bye-election a dozen years ago, in which a Cabinet Minister was concerned, made £20 in a fortnight by sending off reports to the London papers and to one or two of the leading provincial dailies in his district. He was chief reporter of a weekly published in the chief town in the division in which the contest was fought, and, of course, drew his own salary during the fortnight, so that the £20 was clear profit. Many an old reporter could tell a similar tale, but the possibilities of doing this are diminishing daily, the press agencies stepping in and doing the work themselves. At all great elections, sensational murders, strikes, ceremonials, &c., which occur in the provinces, the agencies send down their own

men, whose reports are used by all the leading papers of the country. Naturally, this means a curtailment of the local reporter's income from lineage, but there are still many other avenues by which money may be made honestly. Suppose, for instance, that a reporter is on the staff of a weekly published in a small town of twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants, or more, or less, as the case may be, and twenty miles distant is a large town, in which are published dailies. It will almost be a certainty that the dailies will come to the smaller town, and if they do they will take news from it, in order to cater for the inhabitants of the town. If the place is an important one, and they have much of a circulation in it, they will probably have a district reporter of their own resident there, paid on salary, but if not, then they will require a correspondent to furnish them with the principal items of local news. In this case, the probability is that the correspondent will be a local reporter, paid at lineage rates for accepted paragraphs. In addition to these dailies, the London agencies will each have a correspondent, again a local reporter, to send them items of news too trivial to warrant sending a man down for, and yet important enough to render it necessary that they should be secured. Still another field is that which relates to class or trade journalism. There are numbers of weekly and monthly journals published in the interests of the various professions, trades, and handicrafts of the day, and these are filled with news relating to those departments—news collected from every corner of the country. A large amount of correspondence is done

for these publications, and to the reporter who keeps his eyes open and looks for openings a large addition to his ordinary income may be made from this source. Suppose the reporter is stationed in the town where the staple industries are connected with the iron and steel trades. Now there are several papers published in the interests of these trades, and from all towns of importance paragraphs are published weekly describing the state of trade and recording the progress of events during the week—strikes, inventions, discoveries, large orders, &c. These paragraphs are usually written by the local reporters, and are paid for sometimes at a very high rate. And so with every department of trade and commerce, with the learned professions, and with the various religious and other movements of the day. All the papers representing these varied matters will take a certain amount of provincial news, and if they do not require stated weekly paragraphs they will accept items of special importance. Most reporters have numbers of these publications on their lists, and add nice sums annually to their incomes from this source. But a reporter has no need to be actually correspondent for some of these papers to make money out of them. Let an important event occur in his district—a special event, that is, one which concerns a section of the community more than a whole, and he may, if he tries, turn it to good account. I will show what I mean a little more explicitly. A prominent manufacturer dies, or an important discovery is made in some particular department of a local trade—either of these events

would be acceptable to the papers published in the interests of that trade. It may be urged that these class publications may obtain all they wish from the dailies. This is very often the case, I admit, but even then there is hope. The report in the daily paper may be long, and as the class paper would only require a short account, the long report would have to be boiled down—perhaps re-written altogether. If at the moment the editor or sub. were about to do this the post placed on his desk an envelope containing a crisp, well-written summary of the case, of the length required, ninety-nine out of every hundred subs. would accept it gladly, and would remember that correspondent in the future, looking with favour upon his copy. A sharp reporter will find plenty of openings for this kind of work. In doing it, he should aim at conciseness and brevity, united with a telling, readable style; should remember the particular interests his papers watch over, and should never miss an important item of news, as by doing so he will weaken the confidence placed in him by his far away employers. It should be remembered, of course, that in all matters of correspondence the reporter should never allow his extra work to interfere with his duty to his first employers.

There are some proprietors who will not allow their staff to undertake lineage for other papers. If the papers their reporters supplied with news competed with their own papers, then the employer who pays his staff to look after his interests would be justified

in stepping in, but any attempt to do more than this is, to my thinking, a distinct interference with the liberties and privileges of reporters. Just one other word of caution—the reporter should never encroach on another man's preserves. Generally speaking, the reporters in a town know what papers are supplied by each of them, and any attempt to cut the ground from under another man's feet by sending news to his paper, is looked upon as mean and dastardly. There are black sheep in every profession, and it is a matter which has to be recorded with regret that in some places—generally small towns, where the reporters know little of Press usages and traditions—there are to be found reporters mean enough to carry on this underhand method of supplanting their brother Pressmen. Cases have been brought to my notice where reporters, having made themselves acquainted with the names of the papers supplied by others, have deliberately set to work to “cut in”—as they called it—and oust the rightful correspondents. Now that the Institute of Journalists is in full working order, matters of this sort may be settled by the local authorities, though if the offender is not a member—and it rarely happens that such offenders are—it is somewhat difficult to work out a cure. The best thing to do is to keep on preaching to such men, in the hope that some day they may see that they are not cutting a very gentlemanly figure by practising methods which would be scorned by the average shoeblack or crossing-sweeper.

5. RIVALRY AMONG REPORTERS.

There is a good deal of rivalry among reporters. Much of it, indeed the larger portion of it, is of a friendly and perfectly amicable character, and some of it, on the other hand, is of a nature quite the reverse. In a large measure this rivalry is a direct outcome of the conditions under which newspaper work is carried on. The average proprietor, editor, or chief reporter likes to produce a first-rate paper; one which shall leave all rivals behind in the extent of its news and the quality of its make-up. The public, as well as newspaper people, set great store on exclusive news, and it is not at all surprising, in view of this fact, that "exclusives" are much sought after in the average newspaper office. I once heard a wide-awake chief reporter define an "exclusive" as "an item of news one paper had, and the other hadn't but ought to have had." This about hits the mark. It is an item of news which appears in one local paper and not in another, and the degree to which its loss is mourned by the paper missing it may be taken as indicating its value to the successful journal publishing it. A reporter's duty to his employers imposes upon him the necessity of keeping his business to himself; that is to say, business which is not of what may be called a public character. There are many appointments at which all the local papers will be represented as often as they come round, such as the police-courts and the meetings of the various authorities in the town. Obviously very little is to be gained by a reporter assuming a secretive air

and sphinx-like demeanour when on his way to appointments such as these. But it may be that he is marked for a meeting of some society who have not advertised their gathering publicly, but have merely sent an invitation to the office to be represented. A reporter's own intelligence will tell him, under circumstances of this or a similar character, that there is a probability that he is on the track of an exclusive, and to inform a rival reporter where he was going would only be to acquaint him with an appointment of which he perchance had no knowledge, and to foolishly throw away an exclusive. In all such matters as these it is well to be on guard. I remember the chief of a paper walking into the office of a rival daily, and asking the chief of the staff if he intended sending to so-and-so, naming an appointment in a country district which would necessitate, if sent to, the expense of a trap or hansom. The second chief had heard nothing of the appointment, but instead of saying so he at once replied that he had intended sending, following this up with the suggestion that the two offices should join in the expense of a conveyance. This agreement was accordingly made. Later on the first chief was told how he had given himself away, and was very much chagrined at his want of discretion. He would much rather have preferred to keep the matter to himself, even if he had had to pay for the whole cost of the conveyance. This serves to show that it is never safe to take it for granted that your opposition reporters know all that is going on. It is always advisable to keep your own counsel; it pays best in the long run. Of course, it must not be

imagined that I am advocating that a reporter should be unsociable. An unsociable reporter—I am thankful I have not met many—is one of the most aggravating men to work with I know. I mean the sort of men who work with their hands over their copy-paper and notebooks, so that their neighbours shall see nothing of what they are writing ; who refuse to give particulars of the opening of a meeting to a reporter who turns up late, and who decline to enter into any of those labour-saving arrangements which so much conduce to the fostering of a spirit of harmony and unity amongst those who do enter into them. Men of this stamp are usually sneaks at bottom, and it is well to give them a wide berth and trust them with nothing. The man who does trust them will, in all probability, find that his confidence is misplaced, and he will be fortunate if he is not grievously “let down” before long.

CHAPTER X.

DISTRICT REPORTING.

MUCH of the matter which has appeared in preceding chapters, though applicable to all young journalists, was more especially directed towards those who are commencing their career as junior members of reporting staffs. It very often happens, however, that the first appointment the tyro receives is that of district reporter, either for a daily, an evening, or a weekly. Though the actual reporting work is practically of the same character as that to be done by the home staff, the circumstances of a district reporter are so widely different that a chapter dealing with this department of Press work is a necessity in a book of this character.

A district reporter is one located in a district at a greater or less distance from the head office. He is generally a member of the staff, in receipt of a fixed wage, and his work is to cover the particular district in which he is stationed, to act as the local representative of his paper, and to send on to the head office every item of news which will interest the readers of his paper in that particular corner of its constituency. Such, in brief, are the duties of a "district man." In some

cases, if the paper is a large and wealthy one, it will have an office in each of its districts, where papers may be purchased, advertisements handed in, and items of news sent. In these cases the district reporter will have an office or apartment in which to do his writing, and probably an assistant to do the routine and commercial part of the work. Situations such as these are the plums of district reporting, and are far and away more to be desired than the humbler berths filled by less-favoured local representatives.

As a rule, the district reporter, from a purely professional point of view, has not one of the best of posts, nor is district work ever looked upon as the summit of a reporter's ambition. The man who, having commenced as a district reporter, would wish to end his days in that capacity, shuts his eyes to the possibilities of his profession, and would not be the sort of person to set the Thames on fire if by any chance he found his way to London. District men are usually looked upon as being lower down the ladder than members of the home staff, and, if for no other reason than this, their position must necessarily be one which all men of ambition would wish to change as soon as possible. All the same, the district reporter holds a position of much responsibility, and the influence and circulation of his paper in his particular district are necessarily largely dependent upon him. For, after all, what the public want is news, and it is news which is the first factor either in the success or failure of a newspaper. The leading articles of a paper rarely influence its circulation, though, on the other hand, its popularity

and hold upon its readers will sensibly diminish if its compilation of news shows a marked and continued falling-off. Hence the necessity for good reporters—a necessity which is certainly as imperative in the case of the district men as in the case of the home staff. For in the latter instance there are the editor and chief reporter guiding and directing their energies, and seeing that the local news is kept up to the standard of excellence common to the paper; whereas the district men are apart and isolated, situate perhaps twenty miles from headquarters, thrown absolutely upon their own resources and energies, and more or less out of touch with the daily circumstances of the office in whose employment they are retained. Hence, I repeat, it is imperative that the district reporter should be a person of industry and ability, and should possess within him all those faculties and qualities necessary to the making of a first-rate reporter.

One of the first duties of a new district representative is to become thoroughly acquainted with his district. If, say, he should be stationed in some town or large village in the centre of his district, he should at once seek to acquire every bit of information possible concerning the town, its population, its manufactures, its public officials, its mode of government, its leading inhabitants, its history and peculiarities, and everything else concerning it which is likely to be of help to him in the performance of his duties. Same with the whole of his district—he should endeavour to make himself acquainted with the name and situation of every town and village within it, with all the local magnates and

county gentry, and with every public official. If there is any history or directory which will enable him to do this he should see about securing the work, and, if he borrows it, he should take care that he does not return it until he has either committed to memory or copied every fact calculated to be of benefit to him in the pursuit of his daily occupation.

He should also early make the acquaintance of the local officials—the Chief Constable or Superintendent of Police, the Town Clerk or Clerk to the Local Board or Urban District Council, as it will now be known, and any other public official with whom he may be brought into contact. It is necessary that he should be personally known to these personages, and that they should be acquainted with his address, as it very often happens that they have communications to make to the representatives of the Press, and, unless they know him, he may one day be perchance wandering about the town in blissful ignorance of the fact that some local official or other is at that moment dictating to the reporters for the local papers an important item of news which he himself would have been called in to share had the official in question had a better knowledge either of him personally or his whereabouts. Nothing is ever lost by a reporter being well known, and in the case of a district reporter he will find himself heavily handicapped if he, in this respect, is not on a level with the representatives of the local newspapers.

Close attention should be paid to the public life of the town. A diary should be purchased—a strong pocket diary for preference—and in this should be

entered in advance the date and hour of all meetings of local public authorities, as Town Councils, County Councils, Urban, District, and Parish Councils, Boards of Guardians, Burial Boards, &c., together with the days upon which the local borough or county police meet in Petty Session. Quarter Sessions and Assizes, if they come within the district, should be watched and regularly entered up; and the walls and hoardings should be frequently scanned, as well as the advertisement columns of the local papers, for notifications of coming events. Only by these means will the district reporter keep in touch with the life of his district, and only by these means will he be enabled to keep pace with each day's work and *miss nothing*.

He should make the acquaintance of the other reporters in the town, and, if he be sensible, he will cultivate their friendship. If he does not he will perhaps suffer, as a district reporter in a strange town is placed at an enormous disadvantage. At meetings he will be at a loss for names; if on good terms with the other reporters they will not mind helping him in this matter; a local personage of importance may die, and the district man, to whom he is perhaps only known by sight and name, may not have matter sufficient to write more than half a dozen lines of obituary, whereas half a column may be necessary; here again the local reporters would come in useful, either in giving the information or in putting him in the way of easily obtaining it from some other source. In these and many other ways the district reporter will find it to his advantage to keep on good terms with the other reporters he will meet in his

district. They have it in their power to make his life either very comfortable or very uncomfortable, and it is generally found that if war should chance to be declared it is the district reporter, the stranger, who suffers most and first desires a cessation of hostilities.

With regard to his employers the district reporter should seek diligently to further their interests, and to maintain and increase the sale and influence of his paper in his district. This is best obtained by a constant and full service of news. He will early find out the class of news which takes best and results in the largest sale of his paper, and, having acquired that information, he will seek to pay particular attention to that department. This is an important point, and one that requires watching very carefully; and yet it is a point which some reporters pay very little attention to. I have known men who report for Liberal and Nonconformist papers send fearfully long reports of Primrose League meetings and Church meetings and ceremonies, cutting down out of all proportion news relating to those interests represented by the journals to which they contribute. Same with Conservative papers—I have in my mind's eye now the case of a district reporter who was on a Conservative paper which also made a feature of Church news. And yet what did this shortsighted fellow do? He simply deluged the paper with long reports of Methodist tea meetings, and treated the Church party to six line pars. Several letters of complaint reached the head office, and he was told to reverse the order of things. He failed to do this and in consequence he was discharged. It should be borne in mind that he did not

exalt the Nonconformists because of any special liking for them—not a bit of it. It was simply because he had no sense of proportion or discrimination—because he did not recognise that a class of news was demanded, and that it was to the interests of himself and his paper that he should endeavour to meet and supply that demand. This is a point every district reporter should attend to, and in proportion as he does attend to it will be his success.

A great fallacy entertained by many district reporters is that their own particular district is the “hub of the universe.” There can only be one “hub,” and as all devout Americans believe it to be at Boston, it follows that it cannot be the location of every district reporter, and yet, fatuously enough, they all more or less believe it is. There could be no harm in this belief if it did not unfortunately entail an immense amount of unnecessary labour upon long-suffering sub-editors, whose desks from time to time groan under piles of “copy” sent in by indiscriminating district reporters. In a word, what I am trying to impress upon the young beginner is the necessity of avoiding longwindedness in his reports. Be short and concise, pithy and to the point, and never use six sentences where one will do. In an earlier chapter I have devoted a large amount of space to this subject of condensation, and I hope every young reporter will take heed of the remarks and resolve to adopt the principle they set forth. The district reporter has special need to pay attention to this point. Long reports are never or rarely wanted from him—what

are required are bright and telling paragraphs, full of fact, with not a line or word wasted in telling the story placed before the reader. There are more districts than his to consider, and if he sends too much copy it will only have to be cut down, and in the process it may chance that his paragraphs will be mutilated, his points obscured, and his jokes (if indulged in) lost completely. And if this does occur, he will have no right to grumble, as his own long-windedness will be the sole cause of the misfortune. More remarks upon this point are unnecessary here, but the matter is mentioned in order to show the district reporter that of all the contributors to a newspaper he has greater need than all to study to acquire the art of skilful condensation.

There is only one other feature of district work to which I wish to draw attention—namely, the desirability of getting copy into the hands of the sub-editors early. As a rule district men are furnished with the times at which their copy should reach the head office, and if they carry out these instructions they will be all right. But it is imperative that the instructions *should* be carried out. I will show this by one imaginary instance. Suppose the district reporter to be attached to an evening paper which publishes an edition at five o'clock in the afternoon. This edition, owing to the favourable train service, reaches his district at five thirty, and commonly has a large sale. For this edition to become popular, it must pay attention to the news of that district, and the responsibility for this rests with the district reporter. The train

service enables him to get all his copy into the office of the paper by half-past four, in order to catch the edition, and it will therefore be seen that unless he is prompt in getting off his copy and catching the edition, the paper will lose ground, and his labour will be thrown away. The same with a daily, and the same even with a weekly. To be useful, district copy must reach the office at stated times, fixed by the editors, in order that it may be used to the best advantage. The successful district reporter is he who strains every nerve to work up to his time-table, and who never causes worry and anxiety at the head office by the lateness of the hour at which his copy arrives.

CHAPTER XI.

EDITORIAL WORK.

THE necessity for dealing in any lengthened manner with the editorial and sub-editorial departments is very small. Beginners in journalism are not usually given situations in these branches of newspaper work until they have been "through the mill"—*i.e.*, have passed through all the grades from junior reporter upwards—just in the same way as an officer in the army cannot expect the rank and honour of a colonel until he has performed the routine work which devolves upon the shoulders of the youngest lieutenant. Time was, in the early history of journalism, when men whose only qualification was their ability to write with ease and vigour, were given these appointments without any previous training, even though they were in absolute ignorance of the technics and routine work of a newspaper office. But those days have gone by, and the men who to-day sit in the editorial chairs in our large offices are those who, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, have risen from the ranks—have entered the profession as junior reporters and worked their way up through all the intermediate stages.

On a daily paper there is a great gulf between the reporting and the editorial rooms, and it is hopeless for the tyro to expect to bridge it over in any other fashion than by years of hard, grinding work, in which he shall have perfected himself as a reporter, and proved the possession of those higher qualities which shall fit him for the editor's chair. In the case of the sub-editor's department the gulf is not so wide. It is frequently the custom to appoint sub-editors from amongst the reporting staff, and if the young reporter is determined to make headway in his profession, and on all occasions endeavours to excel in his work, he may reasonably expect one day to hear the welcome call to come up higher. On a weekly paper the case is widely different. The assistant editor, or "sub," of even a first-class weekly journal, usually combines in himself the two offices of assistant editor and chief reporter. As assistant editor he will in all likelihood have to sub-edit the copy sent in by the district reporters and correspondents, to keep an eye on the proofs, write some, if not all, of the local notes, and occasionally—as when the editor is away—write the leading articles. In his capacity of chief reporter he will be responsible to the editor for the efficiency of the reporting department, and will exercise a personal supervision over the work of the members of his staff, planning out each day's work, marking the diary, reading and revising the articles and reports of his subordinates, either in copy or in proof, and occasionally himself taking a turn at the most important of the many engagements which figure upon the diary.

It will be seen, therefore, that the way to the editorial room is open to all reporters who unite ability with ambition. Indeed, not only is the way open, but an actual preference is invariably shown to those applicants for editorships who have been reporters and are possessed of a thorough and working acquaintance with every branch of the literary department; and in this fact is found abundant testimony that a thoroughly trained journalist is best suited for successfully guiding and controlling the destinies of any newspaper.

On a weekly journal the editorial work is generally all done in one room, and frequently by one person. Though many weeklies have an editor and an assistant editor, in many offices the assistant is unknown, and in still others, where economy is the first consideration, the editor combines in his own person the offices of editor, assistant editor, and chief reporter, and in times of pressure has frequently to take a spell at ordinary reporting work. Under these latter circumstances an editor has an arduous and responsible position, and it is not to be wondered at if he at times finds the editorial chair a very thorny and uncomfortable seat. But in a well-appointed office, the work is neither great nor heavy. First and foremost amongst the editorial duties is the writing of leading articles, which is at no time difficult to a man who is well-read and can use his pen. If the journal is committed to the support of any political party, a political leader is almost a necessity, though the experienced editor knows just when to avoid the political element and when to introduce it. In addition to the political leader it is sometimes found advisable to have

a second article dealing, say, with some local question, as for instance the business of the local ruling authority. Neither article should exceed half a column in length, and, though I am aware that custom is largely against me, I think a leader of this length looks better set solid than broken up into paragraphs. Other original writing which falls to the lot of the editor is the column of "Notes" which is now a feature of nearly every journal published, and in which local events are discussed in a more or less chatty and gossipy style. As far as possible notes of this character should refer to local matters, though nothing is lost by occasionally going further afield and having an odd note or two of general interest at the tail of the local matter. Occasionally reviewing books has to be included in the editor's duties, though the literature upon which weekly editors are asked to favour the world with their opinions is not usually of first importance, and no great amount of skill is needed to enable the journalist to pen the few sentences in which he describes the book under notice. At the same time the work should not be done slovenly, and it should be the aim of every reviewer, even though he may only be noticing a sixpenny popular monthly, to see that the publication receives justice from him. He owes this duty as much to his readers as to the publishers whose work he is dealing with.

Apart from writing, the editor is responsible for the policy of the paper. In addition to keeping his leaders in line with the past traditions of his organ he should make it his duty to see all proofs of matter written by his reporters and district correspondents, so that he may

detect anything out of harmony with the general tenour of the paper. This is a matter of first importance, and should never be overlooked. Neglect of this duty has plunged many an editor into a libel action, and lost many another the support of valued subscribers. "Letters to the editor" should all be very carefully read—not only for the purpose of detecting errors of grammar and correcting faulty punctuation, but with the more important object in view of eliminating anything libellous. A "letter to the editor" is a favourite form with some people of having a grudge out against those who have given them offence, and at times these epistles are so cunningly worded that it is difficult to decide whether the correspondent is ventilating a public grievance or airing his own personal troubles and having a fling at someone who has perhaps rightly sat upon him. There are two sides to everything, and in the absence of information giving the case for the "other side" many an editor has been led into the publication of a seemingly harmless letter which he has afterwards discovered, to his bitter regret, to have contained a malicious libel or wicked innuendo. In these cases the law holds the editor responsible, and it is for this reason an imperative necessity—apart from the higher question of the willingness of an editor to allow his journal to become the medium for the circulation of an injurious libel—that all letters sent for publication should be carefully read, and dangerous and doubtful passages rigorously marked out. Religious controversies and letters dealing with trade disputes require to be particularly watched. Many a writer who starts out to

discuss say, the legality of "altar lights," or that perennial topic, the "Roman claims," wanders from the general to the particular, and in his zeal is not above attempting a nasty side-thrust at his opponent; just in the same way as the parties in a labour dispute are sometimes led into making unwarrantable attacks upon the characters of those of the other side. In dealing with letters of this description a grave responsibility rests upon an editor, and in all cases of doubt it is well to act upon the precept mentioned in an earlier chapter—"when in doubt, leave out."

Preparing copy for the printer takes up a good deal of the editorial time. All district and other contributed news should be read through, and errors of grammar and omissions of punctuation marks put right. The headings should be looked to and the copy plainly marked, so that the compositors will know what to do with it. If it is local matter the word "local" should be written upon the first slip, in the top left-hand corner; if district the word "district," together with the particular heading under which it is to appear. If there is no standing rule in the office as to the type in which the various classes of copy are to be set up, the copy should have marked upon it the name of the type and capitals to be used; and, in addition, all side heads, full heads, new paragraphs, quotations, &c., should be legibly marked. This will prevent many an error in setting, and save many a correction in the metal—which means money.

In going through the copy of district correspondents, many of whom know little or nothing about journalism,

the blue pencil is sadly needed. The average correspondent is nothing if not a literary genius, and it is because of this that he is led into inditing the sorry trash which finds its way into newspaper offices from these sources. A dance in a barn illuminated by half a dozen sickly oil lamps was described once by a country schoolmaster as a "scene of glittering and bewildering magnificence;" the dancers—who, of course, were "ardent devotees of Terpsichore"—"tripped the light fantastic toe," whilst at a later period of the evening they unfortunately "lost themselves in the giddy maze of the whirling waltz." This is a specimen of the rubbish sent in by some correspondents, who copy these phrases from novels and other sources, and then apply them to their own little peddling events. Sentences of this description are only what all journalists have met with on many occasions in their dealings with copy from country correspondents. It all has to be suppressed, unless the editor wishes his paper to appear ridiculous, and it matters not that the suppression will hurt the feelings of his contributors, who doubtless view with sorrow, and maybe anger, the remorseless cutting down their cherished productions undergo at the hands of a practical "sub," who trims and shears them to such a degree that their authors fail to recognise them on appearance. But it is necessary—sternly necessary.

General news, as distinguished from local and district, is usually obtained by weekly editors from the daily papers. A short account of the week's proceedings in Parliament may be obtained by clipping

each day the summary which appears in the summary column of every daily paper, while paragraphs of political interest, and the whole of the week's news, in the way of crimes, accidents, deaths, remarkable trials, and notable events, may also be obtained from the same source. The cuttings are pasted upon separate sheets of paper, and sub-edited as ordinary copy. Paragraphs of local interest should be looked for in going through the dailies, and to this end everything should be read, or at least carefully scrutinised, as allusions to local topics are found in the most unpromising matter. All these things, carefully done, go to improve the character and reputation of a paper, and the young journalist should remember that character and reputation will invest his paper with influence, will bring respect, authority, and added circulation, and are the foundations upon which all great journals have built up their greatness.

The routine work, even of a weekly office, occupies a large share of time and attention. The editor requires to be in touch with the manager—who is the representative of the commercial side of the undertaking—and should be at one with him on all matters of office discipline. He must know the trains and posts to be caught on publishing day, and should have such a knowledge of the capabilities of his staff, both literary and composing, as will enable him to bring the paper out to time. To do this it is necessary to confer frequently with the overseer, to have the whole staff well in hand, and to so manipulate the copy that at the last moment there is sufficient matter set up to fill

the last column in the last forme. This is a point not to be neglected. If too much copy has been given out there will be more type up than there is room for, and this will mean a loss. On the other hand, if the copy has been given out niggardly, the overseer may find himself a couple of columns short when he comes to make up preparatory to printing, and as there will perhaps not be sufficient time in which to make the deficiency good, he will have to make shift by filling up with any standing matter that may have been put by to meet such an emergency. These difficulties do occasionally happen, even in well-regulated offices, though as a rule, if the overseer is called upon to measure up at frequent intervals, as he should be, there should be neither oversetting nor lack of sufficient matter to fill the formes when the hour arrives for going to press.

So far with regard to editorial work on a weekly. On a daily the conditions are vastly different. Here the division of labour is seen in its greatest perfection. The editor is the guiding principle and mainspring of the whole organisation. He has around him quite a small army of assistants, all of whom have their special duties, and though all appear to be working independently of each other, they are in reality but parts of an organisation which, though made up of many components, is yet one harmonious whole. Authority and power, of course, centre in the editor, who, as regards the policy and general conduct of the paper, is in absolute command. His position, if his paper be at all a weighty one, is one of honour

and responsibility. The editorships of the large dailies are held by men who have made their mark in the profession before being called to the editorial chair, and who are deservedly high up in the estimation of their professional brethren. As a rule they do little or no writing—they have no time for it. Occasionally a daily editor may indite a leader on some specially important topic, but in most offices the leaders are written either by the assistant editor or special leader writers, retained exclusively for that work. The editor has enough to do to guide and control the great organisation of which he is the responsible head. He directs the leader writers, and provides them with subjects; reads and revises their articles, to bring them, if required, into line with the policy and spirit of the paper; goes through as many proofs as he possibly can, and in short has oversight of everything which is going on in the office, and is the final judge of appeal to whom all doubtful and knotty points are referred.

It is the assistant editor who has the real bulk of the work to do. He is next in command to the editor, and is in charge during the absence of his chief. He frequently has the leaders to write, and when these are done by a special leader-writer, or staff of leader-writers, he still has the leaderettes, or "leader-notes," to do. With the chief reporter the assistant-editor makes all arrangements for reports of events outside the town and immediate district, and orders the London and general matter from the London and other news supply agencies. "Letters to the editor"—of which we have

already seen something—are generally dealt with by the assistant-editor, dangerous communications being referred to the editor for a final judgment. The summaries are also frequently done by the assistant, and so are the reviews, to say nothing of a mass of routine work of great responsibility and far-reaching importance.

After the assistant-editor come the sub-editors, to the number of three or four. Their work is split up into departments, and each "sub" will only deal with the class of work to which he is assigned. One, for instance, will have little else to do but sub-edit copy from the district reporters and correspondents, and the way in which a practical "sub" gets through this portion of his night's work would considerably astonish those journalists who have a similar duty to perform on a weekly. The copy reaches the office in envelopes by post and train, and is rapidly emptied out upon the desk before him. Whole batches of it are remorselessly swept into the waste-paper basket, after the merest glance at the nature of their contents. There is room for no twaddle—no space can be wasted by giving it up to paragraphs possessing no special interest, and, without a sigh or a tear, the "sub" drops ream after ream of paper into the yawning depths of the basket beside him. All the copy has to be looked through, though. There is always the possibility of some important item being discovered hidden away in some unlikely corner, and it is for the purpose of rescuing such that all the envelopes are opened and a hurried inspection made of their contents. The copy to be used then comes under

the pencil. It is cut down to the barest facts; all padding is "blued" out; whole pages are dropped into the basket, and column articles go out marked as "ten-line pars"—nothing is left for the printer but the skeleton, the framework upon which the industrious correspondent has spent a wealth of verbal covering and filling in. Care needs to be taken in the cutting down process to see that the paragraph is not spoiled by the omission of any vital part. I have seen pars. sub-edited until they were worthless. The "sub" who is at all proud of his work will not only mark out but mark in—that is to say he will, after knocking out perhaps a whole page, be at the trouble to write in a line or two on the next page giving the substance of the deleted matter and making the connection read easy. Without this precaution paragraphs are often rendered useless, and their publication serves no purpose, while the correspondent has just ground for complaint when his news has been so mauled that it ceases to become news, and possesses not the least value either to the paper or the reader. Until correspondents arrive at that happy state of mind when they shall cease to regard their own village as the centre of the universe, and shall no longer regard their own communications as the most important in the paper, so long will they continue to send in columns too much, and so long will the "sub" have to cut them down, but in the interval before that happy period the young sub-editor should remember to exercise discretion, patience, and ability in "boiling down" the productions of these prolific scribes.

Another branch of the sub-editor's work is that of

dealing with the "flimsies"—the thin paper upon which Press telegrams are written. These telegrams commence pouring in soon after six o'clock, when the whole of the editorial staff are about commencing their day's work, and comprise copy of almost every description. There are Parliamentary reports, together with telegrams containing news from all parts of the globe, market information, commercial intelligence and sporting news of every kind. All these have to be carefully sub-edited. The Parliamentary flimsy has to be commenced in proper form, the headline put on the first folio, and after that every slip has to be consecutively numbered as it reaches the office, read carefully through, punctuated, and made to read intelligibly before it is passed out to the compositors. The general news from London and the provinces has to be similarly treated, whilst the foreign telegrams have to be classified and marked to go under their proper heads. Although all this work requires care and skill there is nothing very special about it, and the journalist who has been educated on a good reporting staff, and who has acquired all there was to be acquired in that department, will find little difficulty in turning his work out satisfactorily.

The work of the day, as I have already indicated, commences, in the office of a daily paper, soon after six each evening, if I may be allowed such an apparently paradoxical statement. In the daytime there is nothing doing at all. The sub-editors are generally the first to arrive, and it is not until they have gone through and given out the copy which has been coming in during the day that the compositors can commence setting up.

After them the editor and assistant editor put in an appearance, and in a very short time the work of the evening is in full swing. The reporters are sending up great piles of copy, the messengers from the railway stations and post offices are bringing in parcels of news, the telegraph wire is yielding its quota in the shape of the London and general news, the leader writers are bringing in their articles, and from the advertisement counter come heaps of welcome "ads." As the night wears on the crush of news becomes greater, and the office presents a scene of great activity. It is now that the assistant editor and the "subs" bring their knowledge and experience to bear. They know exactly how much the paper will hold. The overseer is called in. He knows how much standing matter—"repeat" advertisements and the like—has to go in. To this he adds the amount of space he is likely to require for new advertisements received that day. The chief reporter can tell to half a column the amount of copy to be furnished by his staff, and upon these estimates the assistant editor, or the chief "sub," calculate the amount of space still available for news. As soon as the result is arrived at all receive their instructions. If necessary the district copy is cut down; if the crush is very great no general matter—clippings, &c.—is given; the telegrams are condensed; and, in short, each man through whose hands copy passes takes care to give out not a line more than is required from him. Even then accidents happen; unlooked-for contingencies will occur, and the calculations of the editorial staff are ruthlessly upset. An event of great local importance occurs,

a crucial division is called on in the Commons, or a message is sent from the Press gallery to say that "Mr. So-and-so" is up, and an hour's speech is expected from him. The calculations have to be made over again, the copy yet in hand is still further abbreviated, and the editors are fortunate if next morning they can appear without the familiar announcement that "owing to exceptional pressure upon our space, several items of news are held over, whilst others have been unavoidably considerably curtailed."

A pretty fair idea of the work of the editorial staff of a daily will have been obtained, I trust, from what has already been written, and will render further information unnecessary.

Commencing as a sub-editor the work is not very difficult. The qualities mostly in demand are tact and good judgment, and if the young journalist is possessed of these, and is accurate, painstaking, cool and collected, and has the faculty of seizing upon an important item of news and separating it from a mass of verbiage, he need have no fear that the sub-editor's chair will possess any terrors for him. From the sub-editorship to the assistant-editorship is no very great step, and in the latter position a man has many openings before him, even of advancement to the editorial chair.

CHAPTER XII.

JOURNALISM FOR WOMEN.

It is a sign of the times that a chapter on journalism as a suitable field of employment for women should be deemed a necessity in order that the purpose for which this book was designed may be fully met. But the truth is that journalism, in common with many other callings, has been largely invaded by the ladies, and, as they have come to stay, it is imperative that their presence in the ranks of the profession should be recognised, and space devoted, in a work of this description, to a short consideration of the possibilities which writing for the Press opens up to such of their number as decide to embark upon journalism as a career.

There can be no denying the statement that there is room in journalism for many clever women. The modern newspaper is not merely a political organ—it is a newspaper in the widest sense of that term. Its varied columns appeal to every section of the community—to the politician, the man of business, the man of sentiment, the man of letters, the follower of sport, and, not by any means the least, to that vast and ever-increasing number of women who display almost as

much interest in the news of the world as the average man. But, apart from their interest in the general news of the day, there are other matters with which women are more directly concerned than men—in the decrees of fashion, in the movements of the more prominent members of their own sex, and in all those multifarious phases of social and domestic life in which the women of the nineteenth century evince so much real interest. Indeed, to put the matter very shortly, the newspaper which nowadays wishes to be considered up-to-date has to cater almost as much for the female section of the reading community as the male, and it is a fact which at once proves the policy of this departure that the papers which pay most attention to women's news are usually those which, other circumstances being favourable, are the most successful. The result now is that a host of female writers have been called into existence to supply the kind of news demanded by women, and the work they do has come to be regarded as quite a department of journalism.

Speaking generally, there is money to be earned from every provincial daily, and from the best weeklies, by intelligent women. We have not yet advanced as far as they have in America, where female reporters are by no means a novelty. In England, though we have lady editors and lady writers, we have no lady reporters in the sense in which that term is usually understood. That is to say, women have not yet entered into competition with men in the ordinary reportorial work of a newspaper, and there are many sympathisers with them who would unfeignedly regret

if ever this were to come about. It is not that women are not clever enough for the work, but that the work itself, and the conditions under which it is performed, are not at all suited to the constitutions and delicate susceptibilities of most women. There would be no difficulty with shorthand. Women have proved themselves quite as able to master shorthand as men, and the fact that there are so many female clerks practising it to-day proves that regarding shorthand as a mechanical art women are quite as dexterous in its use as the majority of male shorthand-writers. It is the daily routine work of a reporting department which would be unsuitable for women—the attendance at inquests, police-courts, meetings, and the hundred and one other appointments which from day to day come in the way of a reporter. Nor would the conditions under which the work is performed,—in heated and perhaps badly ventilated rooms, at all hours of the day and night—be at all favourable to the inclusion of women in the ordinary reporting staff of a newspaper.

But, although there is little prospect of women entering the Press as ordinary reporters, there is a good deal of *special* reporting work for which they are better fitted than men, and it is this special work in which they have hitherto excelled. For instance, at a ball or “fashionable” wedding they can describe the dresses, and who would care to assert that this is work which could be done better by men? Again, interviewing is a branch of journalism in which they soon become adepts, and what more natural than that a famous actress or other lady celebrity should confide

her "impressions" and opinions to a sympathetic member of her own sex? In London, of course, there are almost endless openings for lady journalists. There are the ladies' journals, which, although sometimes edited by men, yet number many women amongst their contributors. Then there are the Press agencies, which find employment for women in writing fashion articles, accounts of special weddings and other ceremonies, and ladies' letters for the provincial papers, one agency even sending a lady down into the country to do special reports of balls, weddings, and other similar "functions" for the local papers. In the provinces, though there are not near so many openings as in London, there are yet many opportunities for good and remunerative work. Several of the leading dailies have each a woman specially attached to their staff, to be sent out to report those engagements in which a woman would be supposed to be specially interested. Excellent work has been done for some papers by women journalists. One enterprising paper sent a woman over to Ireland, at the time when public interest was centred in the evictions in that country, and the descriptive articles written by her were as good as anything which appeared elsewhere. It will be seen from this that there is a demand for the productions of women writers, and women of intelligence, gifted with a fair amount of literary ability, may find plenty of work of the character described above, in the average provincial town. The demand for these special articles by "Our Lady Representative" is on the increase, and, as editors who have opened their columns to this class of news

find it pay, it may reasonably be assumed that the market, instead of contracting, will visibly expand, until in a few years the staff of an enterprising paper will be incomplete without its lady member.

Then, apart from reporting, there is a good deal of work to be done by women journalists for the weekly papers—not newspapers so much as literary miscellanies—of the type of the *Sheffield Weekly Telegraph*, the *People's Journal*, the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, and the *Manchester Weekly Times*. Journals of this stamp usually employ a lady editor, whose duties consist in writing occasional stories, doing interviews when required, writing special articles descriptive of local events, editing a fashion column, answering queries from lady readers on all sorts of subjects, compiling a column or more of chit-chat interesting to women, and sometimes, as in the case of one or two of the papers named, organising children's societies, and writing or clipping a certain amount of matter weekly calculated to interest the youngest readers of the paper. All this is work for which women are obviously better suited than men, and as this kind of thing has been found to pay, it is a certainty that the openings in this direction will every year increase.

As to remuneration, women writers have now not much reason to complain. It is impossible, of course, to give any precise information as to figures, varying circumstances influencing the amount of pay tendered in return for women's work. As a general rule lady journalists do not undervalue their contributions, and

there is a tendency on the part of editors to deal generously with them. In a recent account of an interview with the editor of a popular weekly, mention was made of women journalists, and the editor remarked that at no period of his connection with the Press had he received so many contributions from ladies as during the last two or three years. They dealt, he said, with every subject under the sun almost, and included descriptive articles and stories galore. Many of them were of marked literary finish, and as he had found ladies' articles and stories, when advertised as such, to be very popular, he accepted as many of them as he had room for. Speaking of remuneration, he said he believed in paying women exactly the same scale as men, and the result of his experience was that in the end this was much to be preferred to paying them at a low rate, as by his method he was sure of receiving the first offers of anything good. These statements, from a journalist high up in the profession, serve to show the direction in which we are moving, and go to prove that at no time were prospects so encouraging to women journalists as they are to-day.

Thus far with regard to the work which may be done by women who enter the profession of journalism. On the subject of how to obtain a situation very little can be said. Occasionally advertisements are seen in the *Daily News* offering employment to ladies, either in London or in the provinces, and sometimes work is obtained by advertising for it in the columns of that journal, which is a recognised medium for advertisements relating to Press work. Many ladies owe their

introduction to journalism to first supplying the local paper with an account of the dresses worn at a wedding or a ball, and one case occurs to me where a young woman, in advance of an appointment of this character, called upon the editor of a paper and offered to write him a description of the dresses. Although she had never done anything of the kind before, the editor was so favourably impressed that he asked her to supply a column report of the whole thing, to supplement the ordinary report he intended having done by one of his own staff. The lady performed the work so well that the editor, instead of giving her the guinea for which she had agreed to do the article, increased it to a guinea and a half, and a week later asked her to do a second similar appointment. This led to still other engagements, and finally the editor invited her to become a regular contributor. She now writes specials almost without end for him, furnishes him with an occasional story, and has also succeeded in securing an opening as a contributor to one of the ladies' papers published in London, the editor of which frequently accepts her articles and short stories. From these two sources she obtains a fair income, larger than she would be likely to receive if she were following any of the other occupations open to ladies, and she has the further advantage of being able to do the greater part of her work at home and in her own time.

This case is typical of many others. No hard and fast code of instructions to ladies thinking of taking up journalism can be laid down, as circumstances will be found to vary in every individual case. But in a

general way it may be said that the advice given to intending junior reporters not to seek to secure a position by means of advance paragraphs may be reversed in the case of ladies seeking employment on the Press. The best plan is to write to the editor of the local paper, or whatever other paper the beginner has designs upon, mentioning qualifications, stating the class of work desired, and asking to be given a trial. A specimen of the writer's best work should be enclosed. As an alternative plan, on the occasion of some important local event a special descriptive account might be written and sent in for acceptance. In either case the applicant would be certain to receive an answer, and if the paper to which she is seeking to gain access be unprovided with a lady correspondent, she would, if the editor were at all abreast with the times, be likely to be given a chance of trying what she could do. Whatever may be the case in London, women journalists are by no means plentiful in the provinces, and a really good writer is almost certain to find employment somewhere, and having once obtained a footing, only let her be diligent and painstaking, ever on the alert to keep in touch with feminine sympathies, and she may rely upon it that she will have no cause to regret having embarked upon the career of a lady journalist.



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